The CHILDREN'S YEAR

W. RUSSELL BOWIE

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The Children's Year

Fifty-Two Five Minute Talks with Children

By
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Introduction by
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NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO
Fleming H. Revell Company
LONDON AND EDINBURGH

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New York: 158 Fifth Avenue
Chicago: 17 North Wabash Ave.
Toronto: 25 Richmond Street, W.
London: 21 Paternoster Square
Edinburgh: 100 Princes Street

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To My Mother

whose love, like sunlight, falleth
clear and constant on the
children's year

Introduction

IN recent years a number of ministers in several communions in this country have adopted the practice of preaching short sermons to children as part of the regular public worship on Sunday mornings. The custom is fairly common in Scotland and in some English churches. It does away with that lamentable notion that the Sunday-school session is the only service of the church which children are expected to attend; and it helps to keep the family as a unit in the House of God, and to familiarize children with the church's public worship. While it gives boys and girls the feeling that they are provided with a special message to them, a children's sermon ought not to be so childish in form or matter that it fails to interest adults; it ought rather to be the presentation of truth that appeals to all. Its picturesqueness will not make it any less fascinating to adults, while it captivates children.

Few men have shown greater gifts in preaching to children than the writer of the following sermons. As rector of one of the

leading parishes of the Protestant Episcopal Church, he has made a children's sermon a regular element in the Sunday morning service. St. Paul's Church, Richmond, is an historic church—"the Westminster Abbey of the Confederacy"—and its congregation is one of the strongest in intelligence, public spirit and vital piety in the country. Dr. Bowie's ministry has laid special stress on preaching, and the devotional parts of the service are carefully provided for; and the children's sermon has not only not detracted from the reverent spirit of worship, nor from the strong intellectual presentation of the Gospel in the light of the needs of to-day, both individual and social, but it has drawn and inspired many hearers, old and young.

The value of these sermons as helps to parents and Sunday-school teachers, and as suggestions to ministers, will be at once apparent. The objects mentioned are all easily procured; the simple language sets the style in which children should be addressed; the lessons drawn will suggest other applications; every sermon helps to make Christ and His message more winsome.

HENRY SLOANE COFFIN.

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Preface

IN regard to the children's sermons which follow in this book, it may be well to point out two or three considerations.

In the first place, it will be noted that many of the sermons are built about suggestions furnished by some visible object. Those who wish to read the sermons to children, or to reproduce them from the pulpit, had best have that same object in their hands.

Again, it may be asked why it is well to have the children's sermon in the church service at all. Is it not better, some will think, to speak to the children in Sunday-school, and leave the regular church service undisturbed by the children's sermon? The answer is that the children's sermon in the church itself constitutes a very real means of making the children feel that they are expected in church, and that they are remembered when the service is planned. It is a familiar fact to see a great many children, who ought to come to church, troop home immediately after Sunday-school because

they are not old enough to stay for the entire service, and because there seems no particular point in their coming for a part of it. But when there is a part of the service, not too lengthy, which concludes with a message meant especially for them, then children even as young as six years of age may begin to feel that it is natural for them to come to church, and will begin to want to come.

W. R. B.

Richmond, Va.

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I

A New Year Bank Account

DO you know what kind of a little book this is? It is a bank-book; and a bank-book may be a wonderfully fine thing to have. You go to a bank in one of the big buildings down-town, and you take your money for the bank to keep it safe. Then the man at the bank writes down in your book just how much money you have given him to keep. If your book says a thousand dollars, it means you have a thousand dollars there in the bank; and any time you want to, you can go there and draw your money out.

Now suppose some one should come and tell you that you had thirty-one million, five hundred and thirty-six thousand dollars in the bank! How would you feel then?

Well, the wonderful thing is perhaps you do have thirty-one million, five hundred and thirty-six thousand of some things that are worth more than dollars.

And what do you suppose they are? They are minutes—minutes of time to live in.

If you don't see that these are worth more than dollars, stop an instant and think. Suppose you had all the dollars in the world, what good would they do you if you did not have one minute more of time to live? And if you have time enough, even if you start without any money at all, you can have the chance of winning anything you want.

Every year, at this first of January time, God gives us a new bank account. And here is our bank-book—the big, new calendar. It tells us that every one of us has eight thousand, seven hundred and sixty hours, or five hundred and twenty-five thousand, six hundred minutes to draw out and spend, just as we choose, in this one year.

No one who had a great deal of money in the bank would want to throw it away. He would be foolish to go wasting it carelessly, with nothing to show for it. And it would be even worse to waste God's bank account of the minutes and hours and days.

When any of us shirk and trifle, we are doing just that thing. If we sit and stare out of the windows, or scribble pictures on the pad, when we ought to be studying hard in school; or if we fool along just half in earnest, in other work we have to do; and if we let the week-days and Sundays slip by

without having learned in them how to be better and finer boys and girls and men and women,—then we are wasting this time of ours which is worth more than money.

St. Paul said that we must "redeem the time." We must make it buy for us all the fine things which it can buy, if we use it well. We want to spend every day so that we get for it the kind of living which is really worth while.

II

Living Letters

ONE of the nicest things in the world is to get letters.

Suppose you were away from home and you should begin to think about all the people you had left behind—your father and mother, and that big brother of yours, maybe, and your sister, and your dog, too. And you would say, "I just wish I knew what they are all doing, and how they are, and whether they are missing me."

Then suppose along should come the postman, and bring you three letters—like these in my hand—all stamped and addressed with your name and brought right through the mail to you. Wouldn't you be glad?

So you take them and look at the writing on the envelopes, and say, "Yes, these are from home. *Now* I am going to hear all I want to know."

Then off comes the end of the first envelope, and out comes the letter, and you

unfold it, and—what would you think of a letter like that?

Blank! Not a word on it! Nothing on this side of the paper and nothing on that. Not a single message for you at all; and you would say, "It isn't fair to send me a letter like that!"

But still there are two more.

Let's open this one.

Yes, this really has something written in it. But, look—you can't make it out, because it's the strangest looking letter! Here it begins, "My dear,"—but your name is all covered up by this great ink blot. And here it starts out, "Yesterday we,"—and then there's a big hole burnt right in the paper—and what with blots and holes and scorched places, you can't make a bit of sense out of any of the letter at all, till it begins to seem just as bad as the blank one.

Still there is one more left. So we open that—and here's the real letter. Yes, here it is—all written fair and plain, and just full of the happy messages that make you glad; and when you've read this you know that the ones you love at home love you, and you love them more than ever.

But there's one more thing to think about. Do you boys and girls know that *you* are let-

ters?—You say—no; "I *write* letters, perhaps, and I *get* letters, but how can I *be* a letter?"

Well, you are. St. Paul said you are "living epistles." And putting that in short words, what he said is that you are live letters.

Yes, you are God's letters. When He wants to send messages to boys and girls, very often the way He does it is to write that message in other boys and girls. He takes boys and girls like you and wants to make you live letters about what He is thinking and wanting for every boy and girl to be.

But suppose you don't let Him write in you what He wants to. Or suppose when God would make you a message for Him, you go and rub it all out. You forget the things you know you ought to do. You forget to try to live like the dear Christ you learn about at home and in the Sunday-school. Then people look at you, and say, "I thought that boy and that girl would bring us a message from the heavenly Father. But they are all blank—just like this empty letter."

Or suppose when God has written this message in you, when He has taught you what a boy and girl ought to be, and when

you have learned a great many things you might tell others about, then you go and spoil it all by wrong, mean things which ruin all the message—like the letter blotted out by carelessness and all scorched with sins.

But the real letter! Wouldn't it be fine if all of us should be like that? To let God write His messages so that others could read them, to let Him make us live letters of how sweet and fine it is when people try to live like Jesus—that would be to become the kind of letter that people would just love to have.

III

The Record in the Phonograph

YOU can see at a glance just what this is that I have here, and you all know just how to use it. It is a phonograph record, and if you put it in a phonograph, it will make music for you. At least it will make some kind of music; that depends upon what the record is.

The other day I went into a house, and I heard the queerest sound. At first I did not know what it was. There was a sort of scratching and grinding and turning of wheels, and that was all. Then, when I went to look, I found it was a phonograph running without any record in it whatever.

The next Sunday I was going through Sunday-school, and I passed by a class. They had a screen around the seats where they were sitting, and so they could not see me, but I could hear them. And what do you suppose they were doing? They were not talking about the lesson at all, but they were chattering and making foolish remarks

and interrupting each other, and not getting anywhere at all. They sounded just like that phonograph without any record. They were talking; but they were not saying anything—just noisy wheels going around.

There are a good many people, here and there, who are like the phonograph without any record in it. They say a great deal, and they are very ready to give their opinions on every subject, but there does not seem to be anything in their opinions after they have given them. They like to run their machinery, but they seem to forget that the machinery must have something real in it to make you want to listen to it.

A phonograph, to be worth anything, ought to have a record in it; and if our conversation is to be worth anything, that ought to have a record in it too. It ought to have a record of earnest and fine and lovely thoughts.

If you put a scratched record into a phonograph, you will get scratchy music; and if you put into it a record which is cheap and trashy, you will get cheap and trashy music.

In the same way, if you and I put into our minds the record of cheap and trashy and ugly thoughts, then what we say will be so

trashy that a great many people will not want to listen to us at all, and will rather shut their ears and move away. But if we want the sound of our lives to be beautiful, like the fine phonograph making beautiful music, then we must put into them the record which is best and finest; and the best record of all is the remembrance of what Jesus was like, and of the kind of music His life would make.

IV

Gloomy Weather

VERY often we hear people talk about what they call bad weather. We wake up and look out of the window in the morning and say, "Well, this is certainly going to be a bad day." Sometimes we meet each other and say, "Did you ever see such a week of wretched bad days as we have been having?" Then we all look very dismal as though something terrible had happened.

Now, when we talk about bad weather, what do we mean? We mean that the rain is coming down, or that it is snowing, or that big gray clouds are gathering across the sky, and making the day look dull and dark. We say it is bad weather because perhaps it breaks up something we had planned to do. The boys say they cannot go out to play the game they had meant to play in such bad weather. And the girls say they cannot possibly wear their best clothes to the party when they have to go out in such a rain as

that. Sometimes in the winter days we seem to have a great deal of bad weather indeed, and some people begin to think it is a very disagreeable time of the year.

But suppose we begin to think what this thing, which we call bad weather, is really doing! The rain comes down, or the snow falls and covers the earth with its thick white blanket. And then after a while the rain has run away, and the snow has melted and sunk into the ground. Where do all the waters of the rain and melted snow go? They go seeping down out of our sight, deep into the earth, and there they fill up the wells and the springs which shall feed the streams and rivers when the long, dry days of summer come. In some years when those fierce, hot days of the summer arrive, there will not be any rain for a long time. Then all the wells would dry up, and people would have nothing to drink, and the corn, and the rest of the growing grain, and the trees, would shrivel up except that down deep in the earth are the springs of water which have come from the rains and snows of what we call the bad and wintry weather.

So you see that, when you begin to think about it, the bad weather is not really bad weather at all, but very good weather, be-

cause it is providing for this big earth of ours the things which we are all going to need. Rain and snow and gloomy skies all have their part in making the grain and the fruit and the lovely growing things which shall come bye and bye.

It is a good thing for us to remember this when we have what we think are gloomy days in other ways. Sometimes it seems as if the skies of our hearts were clouded over with some disappointment, or as though the gray fogs of some hard and disagreeable work shut down upon us, and kept us from running off to the pleasures which we had planned. A boy may get very tired of sitting on his hard bench at school and doing his work when he would much rather be out at play. A girl may feel very gloomy when she is stopped from something she wanted to do and has to stay at home and help her mother with the little children, or something else which needs to be done about the house. It seems as though their plans were all being upset, exactly as bad weather upsets them. But what we need to remember is that just as from the rain and snow come the flowers and blossoms and fruits, so from the gray skies of hard work and disappointment God is filling up in our hearts the deep springs of fine

faithfulness and patience, which can make all our lives beautiful in the days to come. It is worth while to have Him do that. It is worth while to remember that for our own advantage He needs to give us the rain just as truly as the sunshine, and that what we may be tempted to complain about as bad weather may be very good weather in all the big results it is going to work in us.

V

The Signals of God

DO you remember how Jesus used to say sometimes, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear"? What do you suppose He meant? He did not mean that some of the people did not have any ears. They all had ears; you could see them right there on their heads. He did not mean, either, that some of them had deaf ears, which could not hear any sounds at all. They all could hear the sounds of the words, but they could not hear what He *meant*. They did not hear so as to understand.

Let us see for ourselves what it is like to listen and not understand; to have ears that are not deaf, and yet do not hear.

What does this mean?

Tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap. (Twenty-one times.)

Tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap. (Fourteen times.)

Tap, tap, tap, tap. (Four times.)

Tap, tap, tap, tap, tap. (Five times.)

Tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap. (Eighteen times.)

Tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap. (Nineteen times.)

Tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap. (Twenty times.)

Tap. (One time.)

Tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap, tap. (Fourteen times.)

Tap, tap, tap, tap. (Four times.)

You heard that tapping, but did you know what it meant? No.

Well, there is a story about it, and this is it. Not many years ago, in a country across the ocean, a man was wrongfully arrested and put into prison. He was shut up in a narrow room, all built of stone,—with great, thick stone walls on every side of it. It seemed as though he had been put out of this living world of ours entirely, and he was terribly lonely and unhappy. Then, all of a sudden, he began to hear a curious, faint sound. He listened,—and it was a tapping,—tap, tap, tap—again and again. At first he could not tell where it came

from. Presently he found that it came from the wall on one side of his cell. There was some one in the cell next to his—some one who was tapping on the wall for him to hear.

But he did not know what the tapping meant; so he felt lonelier and drearier than ever.

Then he said to himself, "I must listen, and think, and try to puzzle out what it means."

So he listened again.

Then he noticed that the taps came in groups. There would be a number of taps, and they would stop. Then, after an instant, they would begin again.

So he thought—"Perhaps the groups of taps are different letters, and they are spelling out words." Then he wondered how he should tell which letter was which, and he thought perhaps the taps were according to where the letter comes in the alphabet. It might be that one tap meant A, and two taps meant B, and three taps meant C—and so on through all the letters.

So he listened again, and counted the taps, to see now if he could tell what they spelled.

And what he counted was 21–14–4–5–18–

19–20–1–14–4. He listened again and the taps came the same way—21–14–4–5–18–19–20–1–14–4.

Then he counted down the alphabet. 21—that would be U. 14—that would be N. 4—that would be D,—and when he had counted up all the taps, he found that they spelled U–N–D–E–R–S–T–A–N–D. Again and again the man in the next cell had been spelling that out—Understand?

So then he tapped back—25–5–19—Yes!

Then he and the man on the other side of the wall began to tap back and forth to each other long messages. And the one who had been so lonely did not feel lonely and helpless any more, because he knew that he had a friend near by.

You see it was all because he kept trying hard to understand. If he had said at first —"It all just worries my head and I can't make anything out of it," and had begun to lose his temper and be peevish—the way *some* boys and girls do sometimes when they have very hard lessons—he never would have known all the gladness which the tapping brought. It was because he persevered even when the puzzle seemed hopeless that he found the meaning of it before he was through.

So now perhaps you understand too what Jesus meant when He spoke about those who have ears to hear. It is not always easy to take in just what God is saying to us. We read our Bible, and sometimes it seems a hard book. We listen to our conscience speaking to us inside, and sometimes we say we can't make out just what *that* says. But the thing to do is to listen, and *think*,— to listen until we have ears that hear not only what God's messages sound like, but what they *mean*.

VI

The Plumb-Line

BACK in the fine old book of Amos, in the Old Testament, there are some verses which tell how God's voice came to Amos, and asked Amos what he saw. And Amos looked and said he saw a plumb-line. And then God said, "Behold! I will set a plumb-line in the midst of my people Israel."

Now, what do you suppose that means?

Well, let's look and see what a plumb-line is. Here is one. You see it is this heavy piece of lead, tied on to the end of a strong cord; and if I take this plumb-line, and hold the end of the cord, and let the lead plumb drop over the edge of this pulpit, after a moment, when the plumb-line stops swinging and becomes still, the line will run perfectly straight up and down; then you can tell whether this pulpit is perfectly straight. Or, if you are on the top of a wall and drop the plumb-line down the side of the wall, you can tell whether or not the wall is straight.

If the wall leaned out and was not straight, then the plumb-line would touch at the top, but would not touch at the bottom, and you could tell right away just how much your wall was leaning.

When the bricklayers build a new house they use a plumb-line constantly, to make sure that they are building the wall straight and building it strong. If a man building a wall should say to himself when he laid his first bricks down at the bottom, that just a little tiny part of an inch this way or that certainly could not make any difference, and should go on laying bricks in that careless way, after a while there would be trouble, and a great deal of it. For the higher the wall went, the crookeder and the more out of plumb it would be, and presently it would lean so much that it would come crashing down.

So now you begin to see what God meant when He said He was going to set a plumb-line in the midst of the life of His people. God gives us a plumb-line for every one of us to use in his own life. It is our knowledge of what is right and wrong,—that sure, true line which will tell whether or not we are standing up perfectly true and straight. And we must be using that plumb-line all

the time. Boys and girls need to be using it almost more than any one else, because just as the bricks at the bottom of the wall make most difference in whether the wall, when it is finished, is to be straight and strong or not, so the way we think and the way we choose, when we are young, makes most difference in whether our lives, when we are grown up, will be straight and strong.

VII

The Cake Not Turned

THE other day we were thinking about a verse which came from the old prophet Amos—that verse, you remember, about the plumb-line. There is another verse, in another one of the old prophets, which I want you to think about to-day. The prophet Hosea told the people in his time once that God said they were like a cake not turned.

Now, I know you think that is a curious thing for God to say the people might be like, and perhaps you think so all the more when you see a cake that is not turned. Here is one, which I will hold up for you to see.

In the old times, when Hosea lived, the way they used to make their bread was this. They would take a flat rock and build a fire round it, and over it, until the rock got tremendously hot all through. Then they would rake the fire and the ashes away, and when they had made their meal into a

little cake, they would lay it down on the hot, flat rock. The rock would commence to cook the meal into a sort of cake, like a big biscuit. But if whoever was cooking it forgot to turn the cake over, then it would be all black on one side, while the other side would be almost raw.

That is just what has happened to this cake. One side, you see, is black as a cinder, and the other side is just white, pasty dough.

When Hosea told the people that they were like the cake not turned, this was what he meant. The fire of God had touched them only on one side. They were tremendously religious in some ways, and then in other ways they were not religious in the least. They liked to go to the temple on the Sabbaths, and they were very proud to say that they were members of the Church of Israel; but then in the way they acted on the week days no one would know that they were members of God's Church at all. They were very particular about the way they worshipped, and very self-satisfied in their ideas, so that one side of them was burnt all dry with their religion, while the rest of them was not touched by their religion,—like the other side of the cake, which is just raw dough.

And isn't the same thing true of some people even now? Instead of making their religion a fine, even thing, which reaches every part of them, it is just a very stubborn habit they have of doing certain religious-looking things, in a very stubborn way. They like to pride themselves on their way of worshipping, and speak disrespectfully of other people's ways; and yet their worshipping on Sunday does not seem to make them much kinder and sweeter and more helpful on Monday, Tuesday and the other days. Their religion has burnt one side of them black and dry, but has not reached through to their week day and usual side.

But, of course, what God wants us to be is like a cake reached all through by the fine, changing fire. You and I must try to be in our way like Jesus, who said, you remember, that He was "the bread of life." And if we really are to be like bread which will help to make other people strong, then the fire of the thought of God must reach us and change us, not just on Sunday, and at some times, but through the week days and all the time.

VIII

A Boy Who Made His Lines Straight

THIS month is February, and we are very near to a holiday which every one who goes to school can tell me about in a second. Yes, of course, it is Washington's birthday.

We know a great many things about George Washington, but the other day some one found out something new about him; and it is one of the very nicest things of all for us to think about. This is what it was.

When George Washington was a very young man, hardly more than a big boy, there was a great gentleman, named Lord Fairfax, who owned so much land that he did not know exactly where it ended. The country was all covered with woods in those days and no one had ever travelled in it very much, and so no one knew much about what it was like. So Lord Fairfax told George Washington that he wanted him to go and mark his lands out; because George Wash-

ington had studied to be a surveyor, which is a man who does that kind of work.

Then George Washington went off into the woods and hills and over the streams to find out where Lord Fairfax's lands went to and what they were like. He was to make a map with lines on it to show just where the country that belonged to Lord Fairfax began and where it ended, and how it was shaped all round.

It was very lonely work and dangerous work, too; for there were wild animals in the woods, and there might be Indians. But George Washington went on, deep into the unknown country, working in the day and sleeping on the ground under the stars at night; and when he had finished all that he went for, he came back to Lord Fairfax with a map which showed him just what he wanted to know.

All this which I have told you of, people have known for a long time. But now comes the next part.

In the years and years that have passed since Washington went out to survey Lord Fairfax's lands, the wild animals have been driven away, and the Indians have gone, and the trees and underbrush cut down and roads built through; so that it is quite safe and

easy to go now where it took a brave man to go then. And just a little while ago some men, who are surveyors like George Washington, went out to make some new maps for people who own the lands now that used to belong to Lord Fairfax long ago. And when they had got through their work, this was what they found—that the old lines which George Washington had drawn when he was working by himself, out in the dangerous woods, were exactly right and did not need to be corrected at all.

There he had been, you see, all by himself, with no one to notice whether he worked very carefully or not. He might have said to himself that it did not make much difference if he made a few little errors here and there. No one would know; and out there in the wilderness it was safer to hurry along and get through, even if he could do finer work by taking more pains. That is what he *might* have said, but he did not say it. Instead he did the very best and finest work he possibly could, just as if a thousand people were watching him instead of no one at all; and when a long time afterwards other men followed what he did, they could not find a flaw which he would have needed to be ashamed of.

That is why I said this whole story is good for us to think of. Sometimes we imagine that because what we have to do seems little and unimportant, or because other people will not mind very much, and even may not know at all if we do not do it thoroughly and well, that, therefore, it is not worth while to take trouble to be thorough. If we learn our lesson half-way, or just enough to make our teacher think we know it, when we really do not; if we sweep the floor where it shows, but not in the corners; if we shovel most of the snow off, but not the little patches that are frozen tight and troublesome, some of us think that is enough. But that kind of carelessness spoils character. Only the boy and girl who do things thoroughly, even if they think no one is looking, who put their very best into their duties, even if they think second-best would never be found out, can hope for great and splendid lives like Washington's—lives that people will honor and admire and be proud of always.

IX

Watches That Run True

EVERY boy and girl here knows what this is—a watch; and you all know what it is for—to keep time.

Unless a watch does keep time, you might almost as well throw it away, for it is useless; and if it does keep good time, nothing else about it matters very much. Some watches have gold cases, and some have silver cases, and some have cases that are just nickel; but though the gold cases are the prettiest, it isn't the case that counts. A nickel watch that runs right is better than a gold watch that runs wrong.

That is one way in which watches make us think about people. We look at boys and girls and notice that they may look very different. Some are rich and some are poor, and the rich ones may have on very fine clothes, while the ones who are not rich have clothes that are very plain, and sometimes worn and patched, too. But as soon as we think about it, we know right away that it is

not the way a boy or girl is dressed that counts—any more than the color of the case is the thing that counts with a watch. The real thing that matters is whether that boy and that girl are useful and reliable, or whether they are not.

Some watches do not run at all. They are broken entirely. Perhaps the mainspring inside won't work. And there are some people who are like that—who will not even try to be good. It is very sad to see that sort of people—who, somehow, are broken inside, with consciences which are out of order and do not run; and they do not seem to want to have them mended.

But sometimes it seems as if that sort of watch and that sort of people do not do as much harm as another kind. You know better than to depend upon watches which do not pretend to run—or upon that sort of people either. But there are watches—and people too—which you think you can depend upon, and, all of a sudden, they go wrong.

Once, on a corner in a big city, there was a clock—like a very great, big watch—which stood on the walls of a building, where every one could see it. It was a corner where the street-car lines crossed, and people got on

and off to transfer. So there were often hundreds of men and women passing by that corner, and they fell into the habit of timing themselves by that clock. They would look at it and know whether they had plenty of time to get where they wanted to go, or whether they ought to hurry.

But one day the clock was wrong and the people did not know it. They supposed it was right, as it always had been. When they got to where they were going, they found all their plans gone wrong. Some were late to their offices and some missed their trains. Then they felt very badly that the clock which had always been reliable before was not reliable that time.

It is just as bad a thing as that when boys and girls who have good reputations all of a sudden disappoint people who had thought they could rely on them every time. People say, "Yes, that is a fine, straight boy. I know his family and I know him. He is one of the strong boys among the other boys, one of the helpful boys in the Sunday-school, too. I like my son to go with him." And then suppose one day the boy who has been trusted to set the other boys a fine example forgets himself and tells an unclean story, or does some tricky thing in a ball game.

People are all upset—just as when the watch they have been going by all of a sudden goes queer.

So when we think about that kind of blunder, we are very sure we do not want to make it. We do not want to be people who can be depended upon one day and not the next. We want to be like the watches men love, and tell each other about—reliable not just occasionally, but every day.

X

The Regulator

LAST Sunday we were thinking about watches, and about people who are like them. The main thing we said was how important it is to be reliable, not sometimes, but all the time.

But there was one thing we did not speak about, and perhaps some of you have thought it. Isn't it very hard to expect a watch to be reliable all the time?—for certainly it is very hard to make a perfect watch. Probably there is no watch anywhere which is absolutely perfect. It varies just a little bit in spite of the best it can do. And there are no perfect people, either. In spite of wishing ever so hard that they could be perfect, the best people are apt to run not exactly true. Perhaps they get an idea or a habit which, without their knowing it, is keeping them from being quite dependable for other people to follow; and just as it is with a watch, which, if it is a little slow or a little fast today, will be a little more so to-morrow, peo-

ple who start to running not quite true, unless they are set straight, will be a little further off the true with every day that passes.

What is to be done, then? How is a watch that wants to run right going to know whether it is right or not? And how is a boy or girl who also wants to run right going to know?

Well, if you think, I am sure you will know the answer—because you have seen it. You have been by the stores of watchmakers and seen there big clocks which have a sign above them, "U. S. Observatory Time." Those clocks get the time by telegraph every hour from the place which knows exactly what the real time is.

For there in Washington they have an observatory where men study the time. They watch the sun and measure just where the sun is in the sky—for the sun always moves the same and is always reliable. So when the sun is up exactly straight above us in the sky, they know it is noon; and they can measure every other hour and minute too. Then all around to all the cities everywhere they telegraph what the time is; and men look at their clocks, and if they are too fast or too slow, they set them right by the real, right time.

Nobody who was making watches or mending watches could afford not to have that right time telegraphed to his clock every day. He must be sure that that is true so that he can make his watches true. I know a poor man who has a little watch-making shop who pays fifteen dollars a year just to get that right time sent to him. Fifteen dollars is a great deal for him to pay, but he knows that what he gets is worth it.

Well, but what do we have—we men and women, and boys and girls, who want our lives to be reliable—what do we have for the big regulator which sets us all straight? You will know when you think. It is the life of Jesus. We look to Him every day, we read what He said and think what He was like, and what He wants us to be like, and by that we know what it means to run true. If we are going a little wrong this way or that way, He makes us see it and we correct ourselves by Him.

It is worth a lot to have Him to keep us true. The poor watch-maker whom I told you about paid his fifteen dollars a year and was glad to, because he wanted more than anything else to make his watches run right. If we are as much in earnest about *ourselves* as he was about his watches, we shall not think

it is strange that what we want should cost us something. Sometimes it does cost us something to have the fine thought of Jesus come into our lives to correct them every hour. It costs us trying hard and being very much in earnest. It costs us the giving up of some selfish things. But it is worth it all if the thing we want most is to keep ourselves running true, according to Him who is always true.

XI

The Bough With the Rotten Heart

YOU remember that just the other day the wind blew very, very hard. It came whistling sharp and cold through the streets and sent people scurrying into the houses, and rattled the doors and windows as though it were trying to come in after them. It took all the dead, fallen leaves and drove them this way and that, and it bent the trees until you could hear them strain and groan.

When the wind was blowing so, I came down the street; and there at the foot of a tree by the curbstone was lying a limb which had just been broken off. The wind seemed as if it would like to break off all the other limbs too, but none of them were breaking. And then I wondered why it was that this one limb was broken off while all the others were holding on.

So I stooped down to pick up the broken limb and look at it, and here is a part of it—

just as I found it lying there in the street where it was flung by the wind.

What is the matter with it? It looks all right. It does not seem to be any different looking from all the other limbs on the tree which the wind could not break. The bark is all smooth and healthy still. What was wrong?

Here where the break was you can see. Look inside. The center of the limb is dry and crumbly. It has a rotten heart.

A rotten heart! That has an ugly sound. But it would sound still uglier if we were talking not about trees, but about people.

And there *are* people who may get to be just like the limb. On the outside they seem to be very smooth and healthy. To look at them, you would not think they were any different from all the other people who are surely fine and strong. They have very pleasant manners and perhaps they can be very agreeable. They can laugh and play and make you think that they are just as much to be admired as any one.

But something is wrong inside.

Perhaps unclean thoughts are there. A boy listens to something he ought not to listen to. He laughs at a story which he ought to be ashamed of. Then, maybe, he

tells it to another boy. He gets into the habit of listening to nasty stories and of thinking of such things, till presently all the sweet soundness of his thoughts is beginning to be corrupt.

It may be that jealousy and hatred get into the heart. The girl at school is jealous of another girl who, perhaps, has been more faithful than she herself, and has made a better record. That jealousy begins to spoil the heart. One day the girl who has let that jealousy creep in will be tempted to say some mean, untrue thing to hurt the one she is jealous of, and she will do it before she stops to think.

It may be dishonesty that is making the trouble. Here is some one who thinks that it does not make any difference as to being exactly honest in little things. They seem so small that they do not count; and besides, who will ever know? So, perhaps, one boy copies another boy's exercise and hands it in for his own, or hides the truth a little when he is caught in a tight place. He may not have seemed to do anything very big that is wrong; but the trouble is that the little spot of dry-rot has begun to work inside.

Then after a while the big temptation comes—the time when it really may be ter-

ribly hard to be pure, or to be generous, or to be honest. The big test comes like the heavy wind, and then that somebody who had the little speck of corruption inside snaps. People are surprised. They say, "But he always seemed so nice, and he was so pleasant looking. We cannot believe he has fallen down like that!" But all the while they did not know that the limb had a rotten heart.

What do we want? Hearts that are clean and whole. In one of the psalms it says, "Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed." Sound in the thoughts of God—that is what that means, and that is what we want our hearts to be. Then we shall never be ashamed, nor any one else ashamed on our account.

XII

Oaks and Squashes

AT some time or other every one of you has probably walked along in some fine, big wood of oak trees. There were the great trunks all about you, so large that two or three boys and girls together could not get their arms all the way around one; and up above were the long branches, with the leaves that made the deep, cool shade. You know that the oak is one of the very finest of all the trees that grow, and that the wood of it is used in a great many sorts of work which people want to be the best. The hardest floors are made of it. Furniture is made of it; pulpits in churches are made of it, and other beautiful things.

And while you walked under the big oaks you looked at the ground and saw a great many little things like this. They were acorns, you say; and you know that out of just such little acorns the tremendous oak trees grow.

But what I want you to think about to-day is this: it takes a long, long while for an acorn to grow into an oak. It will certainly make an oak if you give it time enough, but if you want to plant something that will sprout right up and make a big appearance quickly, you just cannot have an oak.

Of course, there are some things that do grow quickly. Do you remember how a squash vine looks? You plant the seed and after a few weeks there is the big vine, trailing all over the ground, and presently you have the yellow squashes on it. You can almost see them grow, but when they are grown they are only squashes after all. And if you wanted to build a house you certainly would not want to build it out of soft, squshy squashes, and the next week have it come squashing down.

God works with people, too, in much the same way in which He works with squashes and oaks. If all you want to be is a squash you can grow into one very soon, and without much pains. But if you want to be an oak, you must remember that God will have to take a long while to make you anything so big and fine.

I wonder if any boys and girls here belong with the squashes. If ever you get into the

way at school of thinking more of making a large showing than you do of honest work, and if you go skimming over things just because you know you can rattle them off that day, even if you forget them the next, then you know that even if you look big you really are only a squash after all.

Sometimes we wish we could hurry along and get to what we think are more interesting things. We wish we could finish school and grow up. We want to get through our lessons just as quickly as we can and have all the rest of the time left for play. We get tired of having to be made to learn so much, and to do so many things. But it all begins to look different when we think of what we want to be. If we want to be like the great oaks, solid and strong, we must remember that God must take a great deal of pains with us and must keep on making us grow for a long, long time.

XIII

Crossing Out the Capital "I"

YOU know what capital letter this red piece of pasteboard is. It is "I."

This one letter "I" makes a whole word, doesn't it? When any one of us uses it, it means himself; and we use it a great deal. Sometimes we use it too much. Perhaps we know some boys and girls who are always thinking about that "I." It stands right up in the midst of every possible thing. When everybody else out in the playground wants to play a particular game, here is some one who says, "But *I* don't want to." And then there is that time at home when mother says, "Go do this for me," and some one says, "Why should I have to? Can't you send somebody else?" So it goes on, and perhaps that "I" gets terribly big, and terribly in the way, and blocks somebody up into a mean, little selfish corner of the kind of person he ought to be.

Well, when you are working a sum in fractions in your arithmetic class at school,

or in your algebra, and you want to cancel a letter or a figure out, what do you do?

You draw a line through it.

Well, let's draw a line through this capital "I" and hold it there. What does it make?

The cross.

And isn't that just what the cross is? It is cancelling out the big, troublesome, selfish "I."

You remember Jesus said, "He that would come after me, let him take up his cross daily and follow me." This is what He meant—just such a fine, simple thing as we have thought about. He meant that we must do what He did—stop thinking first of all of ourselves and of what we might carelessly be pleased to do and find comfortable right at the moment. We must take the great thought of God and of what He wants us to be and do and draw it through that thought about ourselves. We must let Him strike out that "*I* don't want to," and that "I'm tired," and the "I don't feel like it," that get so in our way at the times when we ought to be doing fine things. When we do that, we have taken the "I" and made it into what is so great and beautiful, the cross.

XIV

The Resurrection Angel, the Lily and the Little Boy

DO you remember in some of the pictures you have seen of the tomb which Jesus rose from on Easter morning, how an Angel was there, with something in his hand? And do you remember what the something was?

It was an Easter lily.

And this is the story of the Easter lily and the Resurrection Angel and a little boy.

It was very early on the morning of that first Easter Day; and the dear Christ, who had been crucified and laid in the tomb, had not risen yet to come back to life and His friends again. But the Resurrection Angel had come down from heaven to roll the great stone away and to watch for the dawning of the Easter Day.

And as he stood there by the door of the tomb, the Resurrection Angel began to think that he would like to have the loveliest thing in all the world there for the eyes of the dear

Christ to see first, when presently He should rise and come out of the tomb to life. And he looked all around to see what he might find.

There in the shadows he saw the linen that Joseph of Arimathæa had brought that night when they took the Christ down from the cross—so white and exquisite and costly.

And there he saw, too, a purple robe that Nicodemus had brought, embroidered all with gold, and splendid enough for the proudest king to wear.

And in the dust, at the doorway of the tomb, the Resurrection Angel saw something shine and sparkle like a flame. He stooped down and picked it up. It was a great jewel —and the rich, young ruler had brought it there. He had sold his possessions to buy that richest jewel in all the world, and he had come, heart-broken, to lay his jewel down at Jesus' feet, when it was too late to bring himself.

The Resurrection Angel looked again at the fine linen and the purple robe and the jewel, gleaming like a fallen star. "They are very beautiful," said the Resurrection Angel, "and yet I do not think that the Christ would think them the loveliest things in the world for His eyes to see."

Then, while the Resurrection Angel stood and wondered, a little boy was coming out from the house where he lived, in a little town not far away. Once Jesus had come through his street and had stopped and laid His hands on his head, and the little boy had looked up into His eyes. Then, when he heard that wicked men had taken the dear Lord and crucified Him, the little boy was very sorry, and he cried and cried. And all the night he had been thinking, "I must take some of my flowers and carry them to the tomb where He is."

So very early in the morning he had gotten up and slipped out of the door, while it was still dark before the daybreak. He picked a handful of roses out of the garden, and violets by the hedgerow, and he took a little brown bulb, too, which he had meant to plant some day. Then he started out along the road.

But he had not gone far before he was startled by some one calling him. He stopped and saw that an old man had fallen by the roadside, and was crying out for water. So the little boy went to bring him water, but the brook was a long way off, and it took him a long time to go and come.

Then he started on again, but before he

had been walking long he heard a whimper in his path. He looked, and there was a dog with its leg all cut and crushed. So the little boy stopped and bound it up as tenderly as he could.

Then he hurried on very fast, for it had been a long time since he had started.

But all the while the flowers in his hand had been drooping more and more, and when at last he came to the tomb where Jesus lay, they were withered,—and their color and sweetness were all gone. And the little boy, as he looked at them, said to himself that they were no longer fit to be brought to Jesus, and he dropped them on the ground outside the tomb, and the brown bulb too, and big tears welled up in his eyes and fell down on all that was left of the flowers he had meant to bring. Then he turned away very sadly to go home.

But the Resurrection Angel, who had been standing in the shadows where the little boy, with the tears in his eyes, had not seen him, came and stooped down and saw the brown bulb, all wet with tears, lying by the faded flowers. And he touched the bulb, and because there was heaven in his touch, the little bulb quivered and instantly began to grow. It struck its roots down into the dust, and

the green leaves came up, and in the midst of them, tall and fair and wonderfully sweet, the pure, white lily unfolded.

Then the Resurrection Angel said—"I think the lily that grew from the bulb the little boy brought with the faded flowers will be the loveliest thing on the earth for the eyes of the dear Christ to see."

So he took the lily in his hand, and held it there when he kneeled down for the Christ to pass by as He came forth from the tomb that Easter Day.

XV

Not Medicine, Nor Candy,—But Bread

PRESENTLY, when part of the service is over, you boys and girls will go out and the grown-up people will stay for communion. They will come and kneel before the Holy Table, and there will be put into their hands something which the Lord Jesus said makes us know what He is.

Here it is in my hand—the thing that shows us what Jesus is like, and what our faith in Him ought to mean to us.

But before I open my hand and show it to you, let us stop and remember some of the things which people seem to *think* the religion which the dear Master brought us is.

Some people think it is a sort of medicine. If I had here in my hand a bottle full of very black and bitter looking something, straight from the drug-store, and I should say to one of you, "Come up here now, and take a good, big dose of this. It has a dreadful taste, but it will do you good,"—that would be just like

what some people think religion is. They think they have to swallow it down because they need it and because they don't dare not to, but they make a dreadful face. They are sure it is going to be something very bitter and very disagreeable. I expect you have seen boys and girls like that. They start out to Sunday-school looking as if they had swallowed a lemon. They come dragging into church as if they were going to a doctor's who was sure to give them a bad prescription.

Then, there are people who think religion is like medicine in another way. They never imagine they need it until they are in trouble. When they are sick, or some one they love is sick, they ask for prayers in church. When they are sad, they want the minister to come to see them. And until those bad times come, they keep their religious thoughts up on a shelf—just as people keep quinine and ammonia on the shelf out of the way until they have to take them.

Then, in the second place, there are people who think religion is like something very different. Medicine? Oh, no. They think it is a kind of candy. It is something nice and sweet to have in addition to other things. It isn't something to live on, but a pleasant extra now and then. These are the people who like

to go to church about once a year,—on Easter, when there is beautiful music and all the church is full of flowers. These are the people who will go to church meetings if there is ice-cream and cake, but will not go just for the pleasure of being helpful. These are the boys and girls too who like to go to Sunday-school if the teacher amuses them, but want to drop out if they have any real work to do.

But religion—the kind that Jesus had and came to give us—isn't medicine or candy either. It is something finer or better than either of them. It is something that good, healthy, hungry people want. It is like—bread.

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life."

And that is what trying to be like Jesus is —it is bread;—bread for these best lives of ours.

Here are some of the ways in which thinking of Jesus and trying to be like Him are the bread that we must have.

We need bread every day—not once in a while, or when some whim strikes us, like the whim for candy, but *every* day, if we want to keep strong and well. And every day, too, we need to think of Jesus.

All sorts of people need bread—men and

women, boys and girls, young and old. And Jesus said all sorts of people need Him.

We need bread not just when we are sick —as we do medicine. We need it when we are well; and the bigger and stronger any one is, the more of it he needs. So if we are well and strong and have big work to do, we need Jesus all the more to help us do it right.

And, finally, bread makes people grow. It makes little boys and girls into big ones. So Jesus makes us grow. He takes the little beginnings of fine things in us and makes them big and strong.

"I am the bread of life," He said. He will feed us, if we ask Him, every day.

XVI

Gardens

ONE of the most beautiful things in the world is a garden, where the sun shines, and the dew falls, and the flowers grow, and the birds sing.

The boys and girls who live in the country can have gardens better than the ones who live in the crowded cities, but even they, perhaps, can find in the yards a little place where they can plant their flowers and watch them spring and grow.

There are three things to think of about a garden. The first is the seed. We must be sure that we really plant the things we want to have, and not by mistake plant weeds instead of flowers. It would not do to sow thistles instead of mignonette, or milkweed instead of pansies. The thing which we sow will be the thing which comes up, and so we must be very careful that the seed we put in is pure.

Then, when the seed is planted, the garden needs the sun and the rain. Sometimes it needs one, and sometimes it needs the other.

All rain would make the flowers mildew, but all sun would scorch them, and make them shrivel and die. So God's weather sends both the sun and the rain, and the gray skies are just as important for the growing flowers as the blue heavens and the bright noons.

Then, in the third place, we must work the soil of the garden. It will not do to let the ground grow hard. It must be spaded and hoed and raked until it is soft for the tender roots to grow in, and ready for the rain to trickle through. And the soil must be worked also to keep the weeds out when the seeds of these are brought in by the blowing winds, or dropped by the passing birds.

We should plant a garden with good seed, and let God's sun and rain fall upon it, and work it carefully day by day; then it will be a sweet and fragrant place to walk in and be glad of.

But the greatest of all Gardeners is God, and the garden He loves to work is the garden of human hearts. If we will let Him, He will make each one of our hearts a sweet and pleasant place.

He sends us His good seeds,—thoughts of kindly things to do, pleasant words and loving deeds. He wants us to let these

seeds be planted in our hearts, and grow up in obedience. And we must be careful not to plant instead the seeds of the rank weeds that grow so fast,—bad temper, and selfishness, and the shirking of our duties.

Sometimes God sends us to make the flowers grow the sunlight of happy days, and sometimes He sends us the gray skies of disappointment. When we have set our minds on doing something pleasant which we have very much wished to do, He may call upon us instead to turn away from that in order to help some one else who needs us. It seems then as if all our blue skies had turned into mist and rain; but the rain is good, for it makes the flowers grow.

And then, in the third place, we must take care of the soil of these hearts of ours which are God's garden; for He cannot make the flowers of fine things grow there unless we help Him. To say our prayers, to read our Bibles, to come to church, to be faithful and dependable in things we ought to do, helps to keep our hearts prepared for God's seeds to grow there. And if we do thus help the great Gardener, He will make our hearts so sweet with pure thoughts and fragrant deeds that all the world where we are will be a sweeter place.

XVII

The Current and the Light

LOOK at this thing I am holding. You can see right away what it is —an electric light bulb. And you know perfectly well what it is for. It is to give light.

Then why doesn't it *give* light?

There is nothing the matter with the bulb. The glass is whole. The fine little wires inside it are perfect. Nothing is broken anywhere. And yet you can see that the bulb certainly is not giving any light.

You say, "Why, any one knows the reason for that. The bulb is not giving any light because it is not on the current."

When you have said that, you have said something much bigger and truer than you think—something not only about bulbs, but also about people.

For some people are just like the bulb here in my hand. They seem quite perfect in all the things they need to have. God

has given them health and strength, and He has let them go to school where they can learn a great deal, and perhaps they have money which they can use, and a great deal of time which they can do with as they please. It seems as though God could expect them to be ever so useful and helpful. They ought to give light wherever they are. They ought to make everything around them seem brighter and friendlier, and they ought to be showing other people the ways of God.

But, somehow, they do not do that. There may not seem to be anything wrong about them, and yet they are not making the place where they are any better. They are not giving light.

What is the reason?

It is because they are not on the current.

Suppose you or I should grow careless about saying our prayers in the morning, when we wake up, and at night, when the day is over. Suppose we should forget to be thinking in our prayers of what God wants us to do. Suppose we stop coming to Sunday-school and to church; or suppose the older boys and girls, and the men and women, grow careless about coming to communion. Then we should be off the current.

We should not have God's spirit in us, and we should not be shining in God's world at all.

But look at the bulbs in the bracket on the wall. There comes the current on, and instantly they are all beautiful and bright. That is the way it is with boys and girls who pray and think and try to remember what Jesus would have them do. He shines through them; and in the way they look and the way they act, people can see His light.

XVIII

Laying Foundations

MANY a time as you walk down the street you have seen the workmen digging a great hole in the ground. "What is all that for?" you wonder; and then you realize that they are getting ready to build a house.

But suppose somebody should ask you why is it that if they want to build a house up above ground they start by digging a big hole down underneath the ground? Why don't they start on the ground just as they find it, and build the house there?

Well, of course you would answer that the trouble with a house built right on the surface of the ground would be that presently when the heavy rains came, and the streams of water began to run here and there, they would wash the earth away from around the walls, and the house would be in danger of falling down. So the men who are going to build a house must dig deep down where the rains and the frosts will not come, and begin

the walls where nothing can get under them and make them weak. They go down to where the earth is as hard and solid as rock and brick themselves, and then they lay the foundations of the house very carefully with stone or bricks cemented together by mortar, so that they are solid all through. When we think of it, we know that the laying of the foundations is one of the most important things about the building of the house. If the foundations are not good, the whole house will be in danger. If the foundations are right, the house may stand for more years than some of you can count.

And isn't it very much that way too with the life which we must be trying to build up high and strong for God? In the years when we are learning and growing and getting ready for the work which must be done when we are grown, we must be making the foundations so strong that big things can be built on them after a while. In school, there is the foundation of knowledge to be laid, even though the studying of the lessons is like the digging of the foundations,—very dull and hard work sometimes. In the chance which we have to help others and to be kind, we must lay the foundations for the sort of unselfishness which some day

may help a great many men and women, and make the world a better place to live in.

Then, best of all, we must remember that the foundation we want to lay for our lives is the remembrance of what our Lord Jesus would want us to think, and to be, and to do. We remember that He said once, "Whosoever heareth these words of mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock: and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock." When we remember Him, and try to rest all our living every day on what He would approve, we can be quite sure that the character of all the work we are building will be safe and strong.

XIX

The Builder's Plans

THE other day we were thinking of foundations. There is another thing also which we can think of about the building of houses.

Perhaps sometimes, when we have watched the carpenters at work, we have seen them go and take out of a chest a roll of big blue paper with white lines on it, and study it very carefully before they went back to work again. Those were the plans of the house, which show just where the walls, and windows, and doors are to be, and just how many rooms there are, and how large.

Nobody would ever think of starting a house without having a plan. Otherwise one man would be building one part of the wall with one idea, and the carpenter, on the other side, might be working with another idea. And when it was all done, the house might look like a lot of pieces of different houses blown together by a cyclone, but not like any real house which anybody would want to live in at all.

It is an important thing too that anybody who is building a house should have not simply a plan, but the best plan he can get. He goes to a man called an architect, who knows all about houses, and how to make them comfortable to live in, and beautiful to look at, and he asks the architect just how to build the house so that when it is done he will be proud of it always.

So, in that same way, we who are building the best house of all,—that is the house of our character,—need a plan, and some one to make that plan. We must not go living along at random, building one part by the plans of good thoughts and good habits one day, and adding the ugly mud huts of mean thoughts and mean habits on to it the next day. We want to build all our life to be as fine and beautiful and as satisfying as we can, and in order to do that we need to go to the Great Architect. We need to go in our prayers to God, and ask Him to tell us what His plans for our lives are. "Except the Lord build the house," says one of the psalms, "their labor is but lost that build it." Unless we ask God to plan all our living for us, it will be neither safe nor beautiful; but with Him it will be both.

XX

Listening Ears

I THINK one of the finest stories in all the Old Testament is the story of the little boy Samuel. You remember that his mother brought him to the old priest. Eli, who lived in God's temple, and left him there to wait on Eli and help in the worship of God's house. One night Samuel had lain down to sleep in the temple, next to the room where Eli slept; and Samuel thought he heard some one calling him. So he got up quickly and went into the room where Eli was, and he said, "Here am I, for thou calledst me." But Eli said,—no, he did not call him and told Samuel to go and lie down again. So Samuel went back and started to go to sleep, but then he heard the voice again, so he got up the second time and went in to Eli, and said the same thing,—that he had come because he had heard Eli calling him. But Eli said, "No, my son, I did not call, go again and lie down." Then Samuel was very much perplexed, but he

went and lay down the third time; and he had hardly done so before, for the third time, he certainly heard some one calling him. So, once more, he went back to Eli and told him that he had come. Then Eli understood that all the while it must have been God speaking to Samuel, and he told Samuel that that was what it was; and he said, "Go back, and if God calls you again, say, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.'"

And then Samuel went back, and presently, sure enough, just as Eli had said, he heard the voice again; and it was God's voice. And Samuel answered, just as Eli had told him to do, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

It is a good thing to remember just what Eli told Samuel to say. For God does speak in the hearts of all those who are listening and trying to hear His voice. We may not hear that voice of His with our ears, but we can hear it with our consciences, and we want to answer, just as Samuel did, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth," and "Here am I."

Once I knew a boy who was going along a street in a big city, and he saw a wagon which had broken down. One of the wheels of it was smashed so badly that the wagon

was tilting down on its side, and the things it was loaded with were sliding off. The driver of it was a poor Italian, who did not know how to make the people who were gathered around it understand what he wanted, and he could not seem to get any help. Then a boy came along, who saw that the man was in trouble and that all the people were standing around without doing anything at all; so he went into a store and asked the man there if he could not look into his cellar and find a plank, which the man did; and then he took it out and gave it to the man who had the broken wagon, to tie with a rope under his axle, and on to the wagon, to hold the wagon up in place of the wheel. So the driver did that, and although the plank was not as good as a wheel, he could manage to take his wagon on to where he wanted it to go.

And once I knew a boy who was going along the street, and he saw an old woman carrying across her shoulders a great, heavy pile of broken pieces of wood, which she had picked up from where the carpenters had thrown it alongside of a new house. She was carrying it along, block after block, to the house where she lived, because she was very poor and those scraps of wood were the only

things she had to burn. The boy saw her, and noticed how hard it was for her to carry such a big load. He did not want to help very much, because he thought that the wood would put dust and dirt all over his coat; and then it made him shy to go along the street with the old woman, carrying such a big bundle of wood. But something inside told him that he ought to; so he went up and took the bundle on his own shoulders and went to where the old woman told him she lived, to help her carry the wood home.

Now these two boys were very much like Samuel. God's voice was speaking in their hearts; and instead of making believe they did not know it, they stood up and answered, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

God will always be speaking to us in that way, and giving us helpful things to do for Him, if we are not afraid to listen. If we are thinking a great deal about ourselves, and about what we would like to do; and being timid all the time about what other people will say if we go ahead when other people are holding back; then we will stop hearing God's voice distinctly, and, after a while, we will get to thinking that He does not speak at all. But we will hear it more and more, all the time, if every time we do hear it we rise

up quickly and say, "Here am I, for thou calledst me."

There is a beautiful hymn in our Hymn Book, which one day you want to learn. It is number 568, and this is the third verse of it.

"Oh, give me Samuel's ear,
The open ear, O Lord,
Alive and quick to hear
Each whisper of Thy word!
Like him to answer at Thy call,
And to obey Thee first of all."

XXI

The Pebble in a Hero's Hand

YOU can see these things which I have here in my hand, and tell in an instant what they are, and can count them for me. They are little stones—five stones. And as you look at them again you can see that they are very round and smooth. They came out of the bed of a brook where the waters, flowing continually round them, and turning them about against each other, and against the bed of the brook, have worn all their sharp edges off, and made them as they are.

There is a fine story in our Old Testament which has to do with five smooth stones which somebody picked up out of a brook. Some of the boys and girls will remember who that somebody was. It was David. And he took those stones out of a brook that day when he went out to fight the giant Goliath.

You will remember that, in the story, David came down to the camp of Saul's army where

his brothers were soldiers, and when he came there he heard that this huge giant Goliath came out every day and dared any of the soldiers of Israel to come out and fight against him. He was so big and strong that nobody was brave enough to take up the dare he gave them, and all the men of Israel were frightened and half of a mind to run away. Even Saul himself, the king, seemed to be afraid; and as for David's great, full-grown brothers, though they could talk very loud, they seemed to have not the least idea of doing anything especially dangerous.

Now David had never been a soldier. He was just a lad who had been keeping his father's sheep, and no one would ever have thought of him as the one to fight such a terrible warrior as Goliath. But David said he was not afraid to come out to meet him: for his country's sake, and with God's help, he would dare what no one else had dared.

When Saul found that David meant to go out and meet Goliath, he sent for him and offered David his own armor. He said he would lend David his helmet and his breastplate and shield and his great sword. David tried all these, but he said that they were all too big and heavy, and he put them down again. He took his shepherd's sling and

went out with that, and picked five stones out of a brook that ran across his pathway to use in that sling of his.

When Goliath drew near, and saw the lad David coming out against him with nothing but a sling, he was half angry and half amused. He laughed in his loud, coarse way, and made fun of David. He would kill him presently, he said, and leave his body for the birds and beasts to eat.

But David took one of the smooth stones, and he put it in his sling. He whirled that sling about his head, and letting it go, he slung the smooth stone from it. Straight and true and terribly swift it went, and struck Goliath in the middle of his forehead, and the huge, boastful giant shook and trembled, and fell down on his face dead.

He had boasted about his sword and his spear and all the great weapons he had, and how he would kill David with them; but David, just with one smooth stone, destroyed all Goliath's boasts and killed the giant.

There are some fine things for boys and girls to think of in this old story of the hero lad, and the one particular thing which I want you to think of to-day is this: that great work can be done with what seem very small and simple things. The one little

smooth stone, a common stone picked up out of a stream, was enough to save a whole army when that stone was in the hands of a boy who knew how to use it.

Sometimes we hear boys and girls complain of the tools God gives them to work with. One boy says he can never make much of a success in the world because his father is not rich, and cannot give him a great deal of money which some other boys have. Some girl may say that she cannot take high rank at school because she did not have as good preparation last year as some other girl. But the thing that makes every success is not the big things we start with, but the way in which we use what we have. There is a story of a coward in a great battle once who looked at the king's son and saw the flashing sword he fought with, and then looked at his own sword and said it was good for nothing; and broke it in two, and threw it away, and slunk off from the battle. Then presently the king's son, with his own sword struck from his hand, came and saw the broken sword which the coward had thrown away, and ran and snatched it up, and with it went against his enemies and won his fight that day.

So the brave boy and girl will not be

looking to see what sort of better tools others have, and then sit down and whimper because theirs are not as good. The common stone in the sling and the broken sword were good enough when brave hands held them. And every boy and girl, and man and woman, too, can do God's great work as the heroes did if they make up their minds that the best they have and the best they know they will use as well as they can.

XXII

Faithfulness Before

WE were thinking last time of the story of David, and of how he overthrew the giant Goliath with the little stone picked up from the bed of a brook.

You remember I said that there were fine things we could think of about that lad who was such a hero, and we did think of one that day. We thought how much could be done with the little things if one is big enough in his courage to use them greatly.

To-day I want you to think of one other thing about David, and that is this: how did it happen that when all the men of Saul's great army were afraid, this lad David was not afraid, but instead was very sure that he could go out and fight Goliath and win?

If you will turn and read the story as it stands in that old book of Samuel, you will find the answer in David's own words. When Saul was talking to David, being astonished that a young lad such as he should think of daring Goliath, David said

this to Saul: "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this Philistine"—who was Goliath—"shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God."

Do you see what David meant by that? He said that he had been accustomed, up in those mountain pastures where he lived, to take care of his father's sheep; and once when a lion had come, and another time a bear, and snatched a lamb away, he went after the lion and the bear and killed them both. He said that if he could do that, he could beat this giant; because God who had helped him against the lion and the bear would help him now. He was all ready to dare a very big and terrible thing because he had been brave and faithful at other times before.

Suppose instead of rising up and going out to attack that lion and that bear when they took away his father's sheep, David had said that it was too troublesome or too dan-

gerous. Suppose he had said that his father could not expect him to do any such thing as that, and had run away and left the sheep alone. It might have been much safer for him at that moment, but he would have made himself a coward instead of a hero. And that day when he came into Saul's camp, it would never have occurred to him to fight Goliath any more than it occurred to other men.

Did you ever think that people to-day, just like David long ago, have their lions and their bears to fight? We are given something to do, and something to take care of, and along come wicked things which may spoil all that we have been told to keep. The big boy in school sees some little boy about to be carried off into some mean gang which will fill his mind with unclean thoughts, and lead him off to ugly deeds. He can pretend that he did not see, just as David might have pretended not to know about the lion and the bear, or he can go straight out with the brave purpose to keep that smaller boy from being carried off into wrong. A girl, among her own friends, may see ugly habits creeping in, too; creeping in like the lion creeps, stealthily, to work harm with ugly gossip and unfriendly speeches and unkind

deeds. If she is brave and faithful to what God means her to do, she will have to fight against those things, and keep her own heart, and the hearts of all her friends, safe and true.

Unless boys and girls do fight the lions and the bears of the wicked things which come against them when no one is looking, and when they are not sure even that any one will ever know, they will never be heroic when the great chance comes for something which the eyes of all their world shall see. That day when David came down to Saul's camp, he had no idea that the biggest thing in his life was about to take place. He had no idea that he was running straight into the chance to show himself a hero. But whether he knew it or not, he had been preparing himself in all the days that had passed. He had been faithful and brave and true to his father's trust, and true to God; and because of that he was ready when the unexpected test faced him.

So if you and I want to prove ourselves heroes bye and bye, we must make sure this very day that we are fighting against the lions and the bears of every single evil thing which might try to hurt us, or make us run away.

XXIII

The Oil of Cheerfulness

THIS oil can with oil in it is not very pretty, but it can preach us a sermon about one of the brightest things in the world.

Suppose we begin to think about some of the ways oil works.

Not long ago a big ship, named the *Volturno*, with many passengers on board, caught on fire away out in the sea. It was burning, not very fast, but so fiercely that all the pumps could not put the fire out. Other ships came up after a while to try to take the people off this one that was burning. But the wind was so strong, and the waves so high that the little life-boats could not float at all; and the ships could only sail about helpless, while the one that was on fire burned and burned, and the people on her were crowded more and more up to the corner of the deck where the fire had not come. It looked as though they could never be saved,—until at last another ship came

up, which was filled with great tanks of oil. That ship poured its oil out all over the sea, so that it floated on the water; and the wind could not blow it into waves, and the sea calmed down. Then the life-boats went out to the burning ships and took the people off.

That was one thing oil did. But there are other and more familiar ways in which we use it.

Have you ever noticed what the engineer does when the great engine has brought the train into the depot, and is standing there while all the passengers hurry by? He takes his oil can and goes all around his engine, and puts a little oil on every place where he thinks it will be needed when the engine runs again. He wants it to go smoothly, and the oil will make it do that. In just the same way a boy who has a bicycle and wants that to run well is careful to oil that, too. And in your house, if you have a squeaky door, you take some oil and go and put it on the hinges, and, after that, it opens without making its ugly noise any more.

Now, in one of the psalms it tells how God gives to a good man the "oil of gladness." That is, the one who tries to be good has something about him which makes everything go evenly. He is cheerful, and he

helps other people to be cheerful and happy, too.

Wouldn't it be fine if all of us had the "oil of gladness"? Then we should always be calming the waves of quarrelling and bad temper, and helping people out of disagreeable places. And we should be taking the squeaks out of everything, and making play and work run smooth.

I know a girl who was so bright and sunny-tempered that an old gentleman used always to arrange his walk to business in the morning so that he might be sure to see her on the street, as she was on her way to school. He called her "Miss Sunshine," and he felt better all day after he had seen her.

She had the "oil of gladness"; and we want to have it in that same way.

XXIV

Small Starts and Big Fires

OUT in California, for a part of the year, there are months and months when it does not rain at all. Then, on the hills, and on the mountain slopes, the flowers shrivel up, and the grass is burned stiff and brown, and everything in the woods is dry and parched. In those times, of course, if a fire started it would burn terribly; for the dry leaves and bushes would feed it, and it would go roaring on through the forests and over the mountains, so that nothing could stop it.

Now, out on one of the mountains, there in California, is a railroad that runs up to the top, and thousands of people ride on it every year. Sometimes a careless person might throw a lighted match, or some thoughtless man might drop a cigarette off the train, into the dry grasses and leaves by the track, and the whole mountain might be set ablaze.

So the railroad company has had some

signs printed and put up by the track; and this is one of the signs—

> DON'T LET FIRES START.
> THEY'RE HOT, AND OFTEN
> RUN FASTER THAN YOU CAN.

That is a good kind of sign; and it is good for something else, too, besides forest fires. It would be a good sign for us to set up in our thoughts, to warn us against the fires which may get started in us.

Sometimes a big sin begins with just a little piece of carelessness. A boy hears another boy use a profane word, and he thinks it is smart to use it, too. He sees a big boy smoking, so he buys himself some cigarettes and thinks he will smoke too. A girl gets into the habit of telling unkind, gossipy things about other girls. Then, after a while, the little, bad habit has grown into one that scorches everything it touches. The boy has grown to be vulgar in his speech, or weak and flabby from smoking so much. And the girl who told the unkind things has had the kindness and sweetness burned out of her heart. Both of them

may be terribly surprised. They thought the habit was so little that they could break it up any minute before it spread far. But it is like the fire in the dry woods; it is a great deal easier to start it than it is to put it out.

Be careful how you let the lighted matches of dangerous things drop into what you think and what you do.

DON'T LET FIRES START.
THEY'RE HOT, AND OFTEN
RUN FASTER THAN YOU CAN.

XXV

Smoking Wicks

DID you ever take a candle and try this? You light the candle and let it burn until there is your long, black wick, and the flame going up from it. And, meanwhile, you hold the lighted match still in your hand. Then blow the candle out suddenly, and you will see a little stream of smoke curling up from the wick. Touch the lighted match to that smoke, about an inch from the wick, and the flame will run straight down the smoke and light the candle again. You do not need to touch the wick itself with the fire of the match. When you touch the smoke, the smoke will carry the flame down.

You remember the other day we were talking about the kind of fire which can be started in people's lives—the destroying fires of bad and dangerous habits. Sometimes a boy or a girl may put out a fire of that kind which may have been in the heart. The bad habit seems to be all stamped out, and

there does not seem to be any danger from it any more.

But there is a great deal of danger if any one who has put out the fire of a bad habit brings the lighted match of temptation, soon after that, too near. You know what temptation is; it is letting yourself think the thought, or get in the place that makes you want to go and do all over again the wrong thing which you had stopped doing. If a boy has been going with a crowd of other boys, and finds that in their particular crowd he is being tempted to unclean thinking and mean acts, even though he may make up his mind to stop these in himself, he may find that he must keep away from that particular crowd for a while, until he is quite sure that he has put out, not only the fire of the bad habit, but the smoke of the thought of it. If a girl finds that there are some places where she goes, and some girls she plays with, who are making her covetous of a great many useless things she cannot have, and making her unhappy and discontented in her own home,—then, perhaps, she also will have to be very careful to get away from dangerous fires until she is quite sure that the smoke of the old thoughts is blown away. The man who has been a drunkard cannot afford to go where

his old companions are drinking, for fear lest the sight of them may start him in the old way again. The heat of the old sin is dangerous still.

It does not pay to take any chances with smoking wicks. It does not pay to bring fire around where there is any chance of it starting up the flame of old bad habits again.

XXVI

Weights and Springs

I WONDER if you know what these big, clumsy, iron things are?

They are the weights out of an old-time clock. If you will go and look at a clock made a long time ago, you will find, probably, that at the bottom of the case there is a little door in front which opens, and inside you will see two weights like these hanging down at the ends of two cords. The cords are tied to the wheels of the clock, up above, and the pull of the weights makes the wheels go round; and that is the way the old clock runs.

But the clocks built nowadays, the finest clocks, and the best for keeping time, are not made that way. Instead of the clumsy weights to make the wheels go round, they have a spring like this. It is a great deal smaller and lighter than the weights, and instead of being tied on to cords outside the wheels, it is coiled up right in the midst of

them. It is like the heart of the clock, working inside.

Sometimes, when I see the two kinds of clocks, the old-fashioned kind and the new and better kind, I think how much they remind one of some boys and girls I know. Some are like the clocks that need the heavy weights tied on to run them. Their wheels have to be pulled to make them work at all. These are the boys and girls who study their lessons at school, and do helpful things at home only when they have to. If some one is always tugging at them and telling them what they ought to do, and what they must do, they will go along fairly well, but just as soon as the pull stops, they stop too.

It is not only boys and girls who can be like that, either. Sometimes grown people are just the same way. I know some men and women, and very big boys and girls, who are almost men and women, who do very well when they are at home, where they have good influences tied to them like the weights tied to the clock. But when they go away and the home influences are not there any more, the machinery stops. They don't go to church on Sunday and perhaps they forget even to say their prayers. They have not the weights now to make them run right,

and they have not learned to run by themselves.

But the best kind of people are the people who are like the clock with the spring inside. They do right things not just when they are pulled that way. They do right things because the spring of a good choice is fixed in their hearts. So they run on, happy and free—being good not because they are made to be, but because something inside them is working of its own accord.

Suppose we stop and ask ourselves which sort of persons we are. We don't want to be like the clocks that have to be pulled into working, do we? We want to have the spring in our hearts—the kind of spring that makes it glad and natural to be good. The only thing which can be that spring is the spirit of God; and the key which winds it up is remembering Jesus.

XXVII

Dependable Strength

OUT in one of the great buildings at the San Francisco Exposition, among a great many other things there was an exhibition of steel rails and steel beams of all kinds. There were the great rails, such as are used in the heaviest railroads; rails made so big and strong that huge engines and long trains can go pounding over them at their tremendous speed, and be sure that the rails will hold them up. Now, one of these rails had a sign on it, which told what the particular breaking strength of that rail was. The breaking strength of a rail means the number of pounds, thousands and thousands of pounds, which the rail will bear before it will break.

You can see how important it is to know truly the breaking strength of a rail, or of a steel beam, before you use it. The man who lays the tracks of the railroad has to be quite sure, beyond any possible doubt, that he can count on his rails to hold up the

heavy trains, or else there would be a wreck. So, in the same way, the engineer who builds a great bridge across a river figures up how much weight his bridge will have to carry, when people and street-cars and wagons are passing over it all day. And he must be quite sure that the steel he is going to use will really carry all the weight which it is supposed to carry. It must be reliable steel, or else one day his bridge will collapse. The great steel company, which made the rails and beams that I spoke of as being in the exhibition, did make reliable steel, and were proud of it. They wanted people to know that their steel could be depended upon to bear all the weight they said it would bear.

Doesn't all this help us to think of what ought to be true of you and me? We must have our dependable strength too, which people can rely on. We must want it to be true of us that people can be sure that we will stand strong, not just when it is easy to stand, but when there is a great deal of pressure upon us to make us give way and bend and break.

Sometimes people, when they have done wrong, whine and whimper and blame, not themselves, but other people. They say they did not want to do wrong, but somebody else

persuaded them to; they say they would have stood up for the right, but there was so very much pressing them the other way.

But that kind of excuse really is not honest, nor sound. It is our business to make ourselves so strong that we will not give way, even when other people want us to, and when the pressure is very great. We must ask God to make us like the reliable steel which stands sure, no matter what the strain.

XXVIII

Barnacles

YOU boys and girls who have been down by the seashore know what the salt water leaves on the bottom of the boats and on the big piles which hold up the deck, and on all sorts of wood that the water can get to. Here are some of them on this piece of wood in my hand—these rough little sharp things, called barnacles. They come and fasten their shells to the boat and cling there so tight that your fingers could not possibly pull them off; and, after a while, the bottom of the boat is covered with them by the hundreds.

Now, if you want to know why sailors, and all the people who have to do with ships need to think about barnacles, you just begin to think about ships and what the ships are for. A ship is made to sail through the water and to carry people and cargoes way across the seas, just as smoothly and just as fast as it can. When the ship is clean, it cuts clean and smooth through the water,

but when the little barnacles begin to fasten on to the ship, on to its sides and to its bottom, way down under the water, then all the outside of the ship is rough and foul. The water catches in all the little holes and roughnesses among the barnacles, and holds the ship back, so that it cannot go nearly as fast as it ought to go. Then the one thing for the captain of that ship to do is just to have all the barnacles scraped off, till the ship is smooth and clean again.

So you see, as I said just now, if you think about ships you will see how big a concern these little barnacles can be. But there's also something else you can think of that barnacles get on.

The barnacles can get on *us*. We are like ships too. We have work to do for God—just as ships have work to do. There are places which we must steer for and try to arrive at. And we want to sail a straight, clear course.

The barnacles which fasten on us are the little sins that grow and grow—the little habit of not quite telling the truth; the mean, little selfishness of just doing what pleases us, and being slow to help other people, and all the other things that keep us from being clean and true. And here are three ways in

which these barnacles of ours are just like the barnacles on the ships.

1. They keep us from doing our best. Like the ships, we aren't quite clean any more, and we can't go straight and true on ways we want to go. The barnacles hold us back.

2. They begin very small, but they grow. You can see in these barnacles, here on this piece of wood, how some are much bigger than others. They are the ones that have been there longest and have grown and grown. So the little sins, if they are allowed to fasten on, grow too.

3. They are mostly out of sight. Suppose the captain of the ship looked about and said, "I can't see a single barnacle, and I don't believe they amount to anything at all." The reason he could not see them is because they are down below the water's edge—but there they are, whether he sees them or not, and they hurt his ship. And the little sins which we and other people may not see, but which we know are fastened on us, hurt us just the same. In the psalms there is a prayer that asks God, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults," and we ought to pray that, too—that God may help us clear away the little sins which we like to make excuses for because we think they do not show.

XXIX

The Compass

THE other day we were thinking about barnacles and about ships; and when we think about ships, we remember one very important thing the ship carries. Without it the ship would be helpless and would not dare to start out at all. But with it the ship goes out across oceans it has never travelled before. Columbus dared to start out from Spain to look for this new country of ours because he had one. Sailors depend upon it every day, and by its help sail round the world and never lose their way. It is the compass.

I expect you have all seen compasses; and if you look well you can see this one I have here, and what it looks like. You see underneath the glass is a little needle, turning on a point in the middle, so that the ends of it swing this way and that. But no matter how much you turn the compass around, you will find that one end of the needle, when it stops, will always have swung round so that it

points the same way. It always points north —up there.

What do you suppose makes the needle do that way? It is on account of something that works like a big magnet. You have all played with little magnets, I expect—these little iron things shaped like a horseshoe, which will pull a pin or a nail towards them and pick the pin or nail up and hold it just as though it were stuck on. Well, up by the North Pole there is something in the earth like a very big magnet, and it pulls the needle point of the compass round towards it all the time. You cannot see the big magnet way off there, and you could not tell by your eyes that it is working, but it *is* working all the time. And because it keeps the needle of the compass pointing true to the north, the sailor can tell always which way the north is, and then he knows which way south is, and east and west, and he can always tell just how to steer his ship. The compass is as a good conscience ought to be —it tells us which way is right.

But there is one other thing about the compass which you will have to listen well to understand. The big magnet up at the North Pole will not draw every ordinary needle point towards it. The needle in the

compass has to be made like the big magnet. It has to be *magnetized.* Take a big magnet and rub it over the needle, and then the needle will turn towards the magnet. When the compass needle is magnetized that way, then the compass is true.

We have a big magnet which is always drawing us, too. Our magnet is God. His spirit is always reaching out and trying to make our conscience point His way, so that we will know which way to go. And we need to be magnetized, like the compass needle. We need to keep thinking of God till those thoughts make us like Him. Then we shall answer to His spirit when it draws us; and, just as the sailors steer by the compass, so other people will steer by us and know that they will be going God's way.

XXX

Gran'pa Grumbles

IN a book which some of the boys and girls read at school there is a story about a bear,—and what do you suppose is his name? His name is Gran'pa Grumbles.

This is what it says about him:

"Gran'pa Grumbles in the wood
Is growing old and gray;
He is a very lonesome bear,
He grumbles every day."

When the day starts out sunny and beautiful, Gran'pa Grumbles always says he expects it is sure to rain before night. If the day looks rainy, Gran'pa Grumbles says that is just his luck with the weather, and he thinks that all the days start out badly. He is never happy except when he is grumbling, and of course he is never very happy when he does grumble, and so he is never happy at all. All the other bears get so tired hearing Gran'pa

Grumbles grumble that they all say, "Mercy, here comes that grumbling old disagreeable bear," and they all run away and leave him, so that Gran'pa Grumbles is a very lonesome bear indeed.

But I think that not all the Gran'pa Grumbles, nor all the little Grumbleses either, live out in the woods. I expect there are some of them right in our town, right in our school, perhaps in our church, it may be in our very own home. Sometimes boys and girls start out to play, and most of them want to play some particular game, and run off as happily as can be to start it. And then somebody just like Gran'pa Grumbles has some objection to make and says that the others always want to play that game which he doesn't like, and he is not going to play at all unless they play something else. And I wonder if any of the girls have seen a kind of girl who pouts and complains when the others will not do her way, and gathers up her dolls and says she is going straight home?

When mothers and fathers tell their boys and girls things they want them to do, there are very different ways in which those boys and girls can answer. Some start out with happy faces and are glad to help and glad to

obey. But then once in a while some boy and some girl—who aren't like any of our boys and girls, I hope—begin to act like Gran'pa Grumbles. They say, "Why can't somebody else do it?"—and "I am just always being made to do things I don't want to." And so they go grumbling along, wagging their heads from this side to that, just like Gran'pa Grumbles in a bad temper on a rainy morning.

Boys and girls like that are bound to be lonesome, just as Gran'pa Grumbles was. People do not like to be where they are, but move away from them as fast as they can.

The bears who had the best time in the woods were the ones who never grumbled, but set out to be nice to one another and be happy together. And boys and girls who want to be happy must remember that the only way is to be cheerful and glad, so that every one else will always want to be where they are.

XXXI

Wet Blankets

LAST time, you remember, we thought about Gran'pa Grumbles, and what a lonesome old bear he was because he was always complaining. To-day I want to show you, so that your eyes can see, just what was the matter with Gran'pa Grumbles.

I expect you have heard people say of somebody of whom they are talking that "he is always throwing a wet blanket over things." What they mean is that when some bright, cheerful idea comes along, and everybody else is happy in the thought of having a good time, this one person always has some gloomy objection which he throws over that idea, and so puts it out. If you light a fire, and then throw a wet blanket over it just as it is beginning to catch up, your fire will go out; and that is the way it often is with merry thoughts when the wet blanket of somebody's faultfinding and complaining is thrown upon them.

Suppose we take these two candles and watch the difference when we try to light them. This first candle is like the heart of Gran'pa Grumbles and all the other grumbling people. It is chilly and wet with the wet blanket of their gloomy thinking, just as this candle is wet with this wet cloth that I am putting over it. And now when we try to light the candle you see what happens. The wick starts to burn, and does seem to burn as long as the flame of the match is held close to it. But as soon as you take the match away, it begins to sputter, and sputter, and smoke,—and goes out.

But when we turn with the match to the other candle, which is just exactly the same kind as the first one, except that it has no wet blanket on it, the wick catches fire instantly, and the blaze leaps up into its bright cheerful flame.

The world is all full of happy things,—sunlight and God's big out-of-doors for us to play in, and good, brave work to do, and kindnesses to show to one another. The thoughts of these fine things come to us just as the match comes to the candle, and we ought to be all ready to answer with the cheerful flame of our happiness that all these things are so. If we will try to keep our

hearts ready to be glad, we shall always find a great deal to make us glad; and the only ones who need be unhappy are the ones who put the wet blanket of complaining over their hearts so that God's cheerful light cannot burn there.

XXXII

Thermometers and Thermostats

I SUPPOSE we all think it is a nice thing to have a thermometer. We like to hang it up where we can see it, and go and look at it, so that we may know how hot or how cold the weather is.

But sometimes it is very inconvenient to have a thermometer about. One July day some people were sitting together on a porch. They knew it was hot, but they were not thinking very much about it, until along came some one and said, "Did you know the thermometer was ninety-two degrees?"

Then they all said that that was just terrible; and they began to mop their faces, and fan very hard, and feel a great deal hotter than they had felt before.

And then once on a winter day there was a boy who was just about to go out to do an errand for his father; and as he passed the porch, what should he do but look at the thermometer. He saw it was only ten de-

grees above zero, and then he commenced to think how dreadful it was that he had to be sent out in such weather, and he went off grumbling very much indeed.

You see the thermometer tells you what the weather is, but it does not change it. You say, "Mr. Thermometer, it really is burning hot to-day, and won't you please begin to make it cool?"—or, "It is frightfully cold this morning, and so won't you warm things up?" But the thermometer just looks back at you, and does not do anything at all.

But now I am going to tell you about something else that is a little bit like a thermometer, and yet is very different. It is a thermostat. Perhaps you have seen a thermostat. There may be one in the house where you live. But, if there is not, and you do not know what a thermostat is, you can go sometimes to the store of a man who sells furnaces, and he will show you one.

A thermostat is a thing which goes on furnaces. It has a thermometer in it, but it is more than a thermometer. It will not only tell you how hot the furnace is, but it will work the furnace so that it will be just as hot as you want it to be. Suppose you want the furnace to heat the pipes up to sev-

enty degrees. You set a little pointer on the thermostat to seventy degrees, and if the furnace is not as hot as that, the thermostat opens the draught and makes the fire burn hotter; and if the furnace gets too hot, the thermostat shuts the draughts again, and cools the furnace down.

So you see the thermometer only tells you what things are, but the thermostat changes them to be what you want them to be.

And did you ever think that the difference between some boys and girls, and others, is just the same as the difference between the thermometers and the thermostats? The thermometer kind of people just register what they happen to find, but they do not change anything. If they go to a party in a new place, where everybody is beginning to feel awkward and shy, they immediately begin to feel awkward and shy, too. If they go into a crowd where people are in a bad humor, they get into a bad humor, too. They leave things just the way they found them, only more so.

But the thermostat kind of people are not like that. They do not just register the weather around them; they change it and make it comfortable. If the boys and girls they are with are glum and disagreeable,

they try all the more to be as sunny and cheerful as they can, so as to warm everybody up; and if those others are all heated up and quarrelling, they try to be as good-tempered and sweet as they know how, so as to cool them down. And so they make every place where they go sweeter and pleasanter for every one to be in.

Which are you—a thermometer or a thermostat?

XXXIII

The Strands of the Rope

LOOK at this rope here in my hands. Suppose I gave it to one of you boys and asked you to break it. You might pull and pull, but you could not do it. Two or three of you together could not break it. The strongest man in this church could not break it, perhaps not the strongest man in the whole world.

Now for ropes to be so strong as that might seem a good thing or a bad thing, according to what the rope was doing. If a burglar broke into your house and tied you with a rope so strong that you could not move while he was taking away all the things he wanted, you would think it was terrible that the rope was so strong. But if you got out into a deep place in the water, and you began to sink, and some one threw you a rope that was to pull you safe to shore, you would want it to be just as strong as it possibly could.

So there are ropes that hurt and ropes that help, and some people are tied with one kind and some with the other.

Sometimes you see a poor drunken man stumbling along the street. He is tied with a rope that is very real, even though you cannot see it. He is tied to that sin of his by the rope which is made of all the times when he has taken drinks when he ought not to have—and now he cannot help himself even if he would.

Idleness may be a rope. The boy who shirks his duties and flinches from hard lessons may get so used to being lazy that he cannot do good, honest work any more.

Selfishness may be a rope. The girl who looks for the easiest chair, and always wants to please herself, will be so used to being selfish that after a while she cannot get untied to do sweet and thoughtful things.

But, then, there are the ropes that help. To start out in school with high purpose and clean, steady faithfulness ties us up to that kind of record so that it will be hard to drift away from it. To be brave and true once when others are against us makes it easier to be that way next time.

For look how ropes are made. Take this rope and unravel it. Here are the three

strands it is woven out of—like three little ropes making the big one.

It is the same way with the ropes which *we* may be tied with. One big strand is made up of everything we *think* about; another strand is made out of the things we let ourselves *wish for;* and the other strand is made up of the things we *choose.* And each of the three big strands—see here, as you pick the rope apart—is made up of a great, great many little threads all wound together. You can take any one of them and break it with your little finger; but all together they make the rope which no man can break. So the little thoughts, the little wishes, the little choices, make the great rope of habit, which will not come apart. Habits can help you up or hold you down. It depends on you and the things you tie them to.

XXXIV

Coming Out Straight

HERE are two nails which once were just alike. But they are not alike now. One is straight and the other is crooked.

There is a story about these nails. One day a little boy was working with his father, making a box. He had a hammer and a handful of nails like these, and he was very excited about finishing the box. He drove one nail in and it went in the wrong place; so he turned his hammer around impatiently and tried to wrench the nail out.

His father said to him, "Be careful. If you pull the nail that way it will come out crooked."

"Yes," said the little boy, "but that won't matter. I can take my hammer and straighten it out again."

"You can straighten it," said his father, "but it will be weak. When you hammer it the next time, it will probably bend again where you bent it before."

"I never thought of that," said the little boy.

And did *you* ever think of that, you boys and girls? For all of us can be just like the nails. Sometimes we are driven into tight places—just as the nail was driven in. We know we are in where we ought not to be, and the question is, how are we going to get out?

The boy may be in a crowd of other boys, who are bent on doing something which he knows is wrong and mean. But he didn't start it and perhaps he says to himself that anyway what happens will not be really his fault. He is afraid of what the other boys will say if he stands up for what his conscience tells him. He thinks that even if he does wrong this time, it will not matter very much. He can straighten out afterwards and be just as he was before.

There are a great many people who think that way. Not boys only, or girls, but grown men and women too. They forget to be careful about the way they get themselves out of tight places. They think that what happens this once will not matter. Next time they will be all right.

But the truth is just the same as it is with the bent and crooked nail. Where it was

bent once it will be weak afterwards. It will twist again the next time it has a hard knock. And people who have come out of tight places crooked are very apt to twist under the hard knocks too.

In the book of Ezra, in the Old Testament, there is a prayer that God will give His people "A nail in His holy place." God's "holy place" is the Temple He dwells in, and the Temple He loves best is made up of all the good thoughts and good deeds of His people. Every boy and girl who is straight and true is like a nail to hold that Temple of goodness together. That is the kind of nail we want to be, and the way to keep on being sure that we shall be that kind is to take care that if we ever get driven into wrong places we shall see to it always that we come out straight.

XXXV

Danger Flags

YOU know what the red color means when you see a red flag or a red light. The engineer on the train sees a red signal on the track, and he stops the train as quickly as he can. The brakeman going back along the rails to watch out for another train that may be coming up from behind carries a red flag to warn it with. In the city, when sometimes the streets are being dug up, and there are deep, dangerous ditches which people might fall into in the dark, you will see red lanterns set up all around them. The red signal and the red flag and the red lantern all mean the same thing. They mean—Danger!

Now when a sensible person sees the danger sign, he does not go right on and see how close he can come to it. The engineer does not run his train up past the red signal just out of curiosity to see what is there. He stops as quickly as he can.

But the trouble is that some people are

color-blind. They look at a red signal and they think it is green, or some other color They see the danger warning and do not know it. I wonder if all of us, when we see our red flags, know that they are red. For you know we all do have the red signals, which we must be watching out for—only instead of being held up in front of our eyes, they are held up in front of our consciences. Here is a boy who eats too much, and when he goes out to play football he is soft and short of breath. That is his signal that he must stop and change his course. Here is some one who has been letting his temper get the better of him, until one day some ugly quarrel he falls into puts up the red flag that says, Stop and be careful. And so we can think of one after another kind of disagreeable thing that might come to any one of us, and warn us that if we did not stop following some bad habit of ours there would be danger ahead.

Now, just as we said before, the sensible person will always stop when he sees the danger flag. He will not think it is smart to keep edging up closer to where the danger is, until, presently, he tumbles straight down into the middle of it.

And we do not want to be color-blind,

The way people *do* get to be color-blind in their consciences is by not paying any attention to the red flags when they see them. Some bad habit of theirs gets them into trouble and makes them ashamed for a moment, but they promptly forget about that, and think that it will not make any difference. Then, presently, they get so that they do not even notice the warning flags any more, and they keep on being a little greedier, or a little lazier, or a little more careless about telling the truth, until, presently, they run right off the track into a wreck.

In the Bible there is a beautiful verse which says: "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." If we keep thinking of God, and of what He would want, our eyes will always be clear to read the signals right on the way He wants us to go.

XXXVI

What's Inside the Coal

LAST night I was coming back home by train, so that I might be here this morning; and as I lay in my berth, before I went to sleep, I thought how wonderful it was to be travelling along that way. Outside the window it was all dark, but the train was rushing along through the night, mile after mile, with that sort of steady rumble and hum of the wheels on the track which is so pleasant to listen to. All I had to do was to lie there and go to sleep, and in the morning the train would have brought me home, where I wanted to be.

What is carrying this train along?—I thought. It is the engine.

Yes, but what makes the engine go?

Why, the steam.

But what makes the steam?

Well, the water in the boilers heated up turns into steam.

But what makes the water hot enough to turn into steam?

The fire does.

But what makes the fire?

And then, when I asked that, I thought of the thing that really drove the train—the great, black pile of coal, which the fireman was continually shovelling into the engine's furnace to make the fire that turned the water into the steam that drove the wheels and pulled the great train along. Just black, dull looking coal, like this piece here in my hand.

When you see this coal, would you think that any fire could come out of it? You look at it, and there is no glow at all. You put your hand on it, and it does not seem to have any heat. And, yet, you know very well that once this very piece of coal is put into a furnace, where a fire has already been kindled, it will turn into fire itself, and all the splendid heat, which you would never guess was in it, will come out and begin to do your work.

Then, isn't it fine to remember that you and I may have just that same sort of thing happen to us, and to all sorts of people we know. Sometimes we seem very dull and useless, just as the piece of coal does. We can hardly imagine that we can ever be good for anything beautiful and strong. It doesn't

look as though there were anything remarkable in us at all. But, down in the heart of us, stored up and waiting to be set free, so hidden away sometimes that we can hardly believe it is there—just as we can hardly believe there really is heat in this coal—lies all the power God has put in us and is going to show us how to use.

What is the way to set it free? Well, you remember John the Baptist said of Jesus that Jesus would baptize people with fire. Until He does baptize us with that fire of His, we are like the coal—dark and cold and uninteresting. But when Jesus touches us with His fire, then we are changed like the coals, which glow and burn, and with their splendid heat drive the great wheels of all the world. It is thinking of Him, and trying to be like Him that turns us also into fire and makes us strong to help things move God's way.

XXXVII

The Boy Who Watched the Kettle

DID you ever watch a kettle on the fire? When the water boils the white steam comes pouring out of the spout, and the top dances up and down. Perhaps you have seen a kettle do that a good many times, and you have never thought anything particular about it.

But there was one boy once who watched a kettle like that, and thought and wondered a great deal. He saw the steam coming out of the spout, and saw the top going up and down, just as we can, and he began to think that that white steam was very strong to be able to do that, and he wondered why he could not make a machine some day that would use the strength which was in that steam. So he thought and thought, and wondered, and planned, and tried, and one day he made the first steam engine, which was the beginning of all the great railroads and the ships that go across the seas to-day.

Hundreds of people had seen the kettle

boil long before James Watt saw it, but they had not paid much attention. Power was there, but it was going to waste. What James Watt did was to see the chance of using that curious strong thing, and then set himself to work to find the means of using it.

The great men in the world are always men like that. They are the men who look at the things about them with careful and thoughtful eyes, and see new wonders which nobody ever saw before, because they did not look hard enough.

It is that kind of spirit, too, which God wants people to have when they look into their own lives. Many a boy and girl is just like the kettle—full of steam that is going to waste. They run and play, and laugh and shout, and make a great noise, and that is all very nice and pleasant, just as the kettle bubbling on the fire is pleasant. But, after all, there is a bigger thing for steam to do than just to bubble up the spout. And the thing which boys and girls have got to find out is how to use the steam inside of them for strong and helpful things. God fills each one of us up with power,—our thoughts, and our knowledge, and our ability to think clear and work hard. He gives us the chance to go to school and to learn. After a while He

may give us the chance to make money which we can do with as we choose. And then He wants each one of us to try to figure out how all this strength of ours can be used, so that it will not go to waste, but will make the big wheels of work and service in our world go round.

XXXVIII

The Keys

SUPPOSE some one should say to you that he was going to give you a very fine present; and you should begin to feel all happy and excited and to wonder what it could possibly be. Maybe it might be a watch, you would think,—or a gold pin —or a ring, or something else you had been thinking for a long time that you wanted.

And then suppose the present came, and was put into your hands and you looked,— and it was nothing but—a key! Just an old, dull, iron key, like this!

You would be so disappointed you would not know what to do. You would say, "It isn't pretty, and I can't play with it,—and it is not worth a single thing."

But, then, suppose you began to think that perhaps the key unlocked something which was rich and fine, and that because you had the key, you could have everything inside the thing the key unlocked. It might be

like the keys to the safe deposit vaults in the big banks, where people keep their jewelry and all the best and finest things they want to have secure. It might be like the keys to the Treasure Caves, which the fairy stories tell about. Then you would begin to think differently about the key. Even though it should still be ugly and dull to look at, you would think it was a very fine thing to have indeed.

If we understand this much about keys, it is good to remember something else we ought to understand, and that is this. You and I are always having the chance to make keys which open the way for us into treasures better even than the story books tell about.

Here is a boy who goes to school and studies hard. He does not whine and get out of temper when the lessons are hard; but he makes up his mind to show that he has the stuff in him which will not shirk just because things are hard. He grits his teeth and he tries all the more, and presently he gets the example straight which seemed all tangled up, and reads the Latin sentence which at first he thought he just never could make sense of. All the while he is making the key of knowledge, and one of these days it will open the door for him into great, big

rooms of the-understanding-of-things, into which the lazy people will never come at all.

And here are the boys and girls who, after a while, have to go to work. They are put at tasks which they do not enjoy at first and the faint-hearted ones think they are having a very dreary time. But there will be some of them who see they must be making keys. They do their very best every day, and bye and bye they have made the key-of-big-ability. They can do finer work than others can, and with the keys of that ability of theirs, they go on into the fine positions and the important work which people without the keys will never win.

So it is worth while to be making the keys of knowledge and the keys of ability, for they are a great deal more valuable in the long run than some of the things which look more shiny and pleasant to play with than a key. And then there is one more key especially which we must remember.

It is the key of what-Jesus-would-say-and-do. We can be making that key every day in our thoughts, and learning how to use it. Whenever we want to tell whether anything is worth doing and worth going after, we can ask ourselves whether or not the key of the thought of what-Jesus-would-say-and-do will

open the door that leads to it. The places which we cannot get into with that key, the kind of thinking and the kind of acting and the kind of friendships which we know that key will have nothing to do with, we may be sure are not worth our wanting. And where that key does open the way, we can know that we are going straight ahead into the very sweetest and finest life there is.

XXXIX

Heroes or Deserters?

THE other day I had in my hand an old, yellow, faded paper. It was a muster-roll.

I wonder if you know what a muster-roll is? It is a list of the men in a company of soldiers. This muster-roll which I had in my hand was one of a company that fought in the great Civil War fifty years ago. Perhaps you have seen in some museum a muster-roll just like the one I am telling about.

In one long column at one side of the paper is a list of all the men in the company, beginning with the captain, who were there in camp and fit for fighting. These were the men who could be depended upon if there should be a battle that very day. They were ready; and the General, if he wanted to count up his army, would know that in that company there were just so many men whom he could count on.

Then, in another column, was a list of the men who had been killed, and also a list of the men who had been wounded. These

men were not there in camp, and could not be counted any more among the fighters, but their names were just as honorable a list as the others; for these were men who had gone bravely into the places of danger and had fought well, even though they knew they might be terribly hurt.

But, over on the other side of the paper, was another sort of list. It was a list of the men who had deserted—men who had grown tired or discouraged; men who were cowards; and men who, for some reason or another, did not have the stuff in them that made them hold on when things were hard and dangerous. That list was a list of dishonor and shame. You looked at the list and hoped that you would not see any name on it of any man that you knew, or that was kin to you. It would have seemed a sort of disgrace to have anything to do with a man whose name was on a list like that.

After a while, the ink which that old muster-roll is written with will fade out more and more, so that you can scarcely read the names, and the old yellow paper will grow drier and drier, and presently crumble to pieces.

But there is another sort of record that will never fade or crumble, either. It is the

record that God keeps of those who are His soldiers.

There are some people in God's army whose names might be on that ugly roll of the deserters—men and women who are members of the church, and who have promised to be faithful, but are not faithful at all. If the weather is hot or uncomfortable, they stay at home and do not come to church. Sometimes they make a promise to work in the Sunday-school, or some other organization in the church, and they do not do it. There are boys and girls, sometimes, who are baptized and confirmed, and promised to be Christ's faithful soldiers and servants until their life's end; and then one day when they get into a group of other boys or girls, who are saying or planning something that is wrong and mean, they desert their colors and do wrong, too.

Certainly there is not one of us who would want to be written down in a list like that. We would not want to look at God's record and see our names listed among the deserters. But what we do want is that God can always count on us to be among His soldiers, ready for duty—soldiers who can be depended upon to do what is right and be faithful every day.

XI.

Salt

HERE, shut up in my hand, is one of the most used things in the world, and one of the things we see oftenest.

It used to cost a great deal more than it does now, for it was scarcer. Men had to go long distances to bring it. The caravans, which are the long lines of funny, clumsy camels, would go miles and miles across the dry desert to find it. And once there was a time when in some places big lumps and bars of this thing were used for money itself. All this was back in the days when Jesus lived, and so people knew that He was saying something big and fine when He said:

"Ye are the *salt* of the earth."

Salt does not cost as much money as it used to do, but it is just as important to have, and it can mean just as much to us as it did to the disciples, long ago, when we hear Jesus' words still —"Ye are the salt of the earth."

Let us think what salt is for—and what Jesus meant.

1. In the first place, salt makes things taste good. Sometimes your oatmeal comes on the table in the morning, and as soon as you take the first spoonful, you know there is something the matter with it. It seems just sort of flat and pasty tasting. And you say, "Oh, I know what it is! The cook forgot to put in the salt."

It is the same way with other things we eat. You go into the kitchen and the cook will have a big box of salt there, and—unless she forgets it—she will be sprinkling some of it into almost everything she cooks. Then when you go on a picnic, you know how you carry little packages of salt along. You would think you could not get on without it.

So that makes us know the first thing which Jesus meant when He said that we must be like salt. The boy who is brave and true, and the girl who is sweet and gentle, make life taste good for everybody who is near them. Play tastes good, and work tastes good when they come along and bring the salt of their fine, happy spirit.

2. Then, in the second place, salt preserves things. If you have been out on a

farm, you know how the farmer will sometimes take his meat and rub salt into it to keep it sound. The fine hams which we keep hung up in the storerooms for weeks and weeks, until we are ready to use them, have salt in them too. Salt keeps things from decaying. It keeps rottenness out.

And that, you see, is the other way in which Jesus means us to be like salt. The boys and girls who are clean and sweet in what they think and what they do keep the rottenness of lies and ugly stories and other mean, decaying things from getting into the school, or on to the playgrounds where they are. They help make everything wholesome and sound.

But there is one thing we must always remember. The salt must be mixed into the thing it is going to keep. Kept here in this glass cellar here in my hand, it will never do any good—not if it were the very finest salt in the world. If it is going to make things taste better, it has to be put right on those things; if it is going to keep decay out, it must be put on the particular things where the decay might come.

So the salt of all that is good, and all that is like Christ, in us will not do any good if it is shut up in ourselves. It will not help if

we know about Jesus, and yet do not let other people see that we know Him and are trying to live like Him. We must try to carry His spirit with us wherever we go; and then we shall really be the salt of the earth, because we shall be helping to make all the part of it where we are sweet and sound.

LXI

The Outside and the Inside of the Cup

IF I should ask you which of these three cups you would rather drink out of, you might not be sure at first just which one to choose. But if I should ask you which one you would rather *not* drink out of, you would answer right away. You would say, "Why, the one we would rather not drink out of is that dirty one—that one which is smeared all round with soot and grime."

But, when you look a little closer at the cups, are you quite sure that there is not one that would be worse to have to use than this one which looked so black? You were looking at the outside of the cups; but look now at the inside. Here is one of the two which you thought at first were clean, when you were looking at the outsides, which is full of dust and grime inside. So really the one that was black outside is not the one that would be worst to use after all. You would rather use that than this one, which has the dirt inside, where it would get into whatever it was that you were going to drink.

Do you remember that once when Jesus was talking to the Pharisees,—the men who made a great show of being good, but were not good in their hearts,—He said that they cleansed the outside of the cup, but within they were full of extortion and excess? Those may be strange words to you, but what Jesus meant was that they, the Pharisees, tried to make other people think they were religious men, but they had wickedness and cruelty in their thoughts which people could not see.

Each one of these three cups can remind us of some people; or perhaps each one of them can remind us of what each one of us is sometimes.

Here is a boy who is like the cup which is not clean on the outside. He may be a good boy, and have nothing wicked in his heart, but he could be a much nicer looking boy than he is. He is in such a hurry always that he generally washes his hands about half clean; and when he is sent upstairs to wash his face before dinner he never, never gets quite around all the way. And so although he may be such a fine boy really, people might look at him and not know that he was.

Then there are the boys and girls who

may look very well on the outside, but have their uncleanness within. Perhaps they are very careful to make a good showing. They like to wear fine clothes; they like for people to think they are handsome or pretty; and they like to be popular at parties and wherever they go. But all the while the thoughts and words which come from them are not pretty for other people to taste, because of those ugly things which may be inside their hearts.

Of course the best kind of cup is the one which is not black on the outside or inside either, but is clean on both. That is like the kind of person God wants each one of us to be; neat and fair in all our appearances, and clean and clear at heart.

XLII

In Quarantine

SOMETIMES when you are walking down the street you may see tacked up at the doorway of a house a little square card which the Board of Health has put there. It may say that inside that house is some one who has diphtheria, and that it is dangerous for any one else to go in, because he may catch it. Sometimes it says that scarlet-fever is in that house. Once in a while you may see a great, terrible sign like this:

SMALLPOX

DO NOT COME IN

By Order of the Board of Health

Whenever you see a sign like that you know that you had better pass by that house and not linger or think of going in. No one does go in at all except those whose business

it is to be there because they can help the one who is sick. We say of that house that it is in quarantine.

Now people cannot always avoid catching scarlet fever or diphtheria, or possibly even smallpox. Even though they take precaution, now and then one of these diseases may come to them, they do not know how or from where.

But suppose that instead of those signs such as we have thought of being on somebody's house, they were on you? Suppose you had inside yourself a dangerous thing which other people were so afraid of catching that they wanted to have you quarantined? Sometimes there is a boy in school, or among the group of boys who play together, whose heart is filled with impure thoughts, and whose mouth is ugly with profanity and unclean stories. Sometimes there is a girl who is overflowing with mean gossip. Then the fathers and mothers of the other boys and girls begin to say to them: "I would rather you should not play with John or Mary. I do not want you to catch the habits which they have got, for they are as dangerous as smallpox, and just as catching, too." Then that boy or girl would commence to be shunned, just as a house is

shunned which has some dangerous disease in it.

Now, certainly, none of us want to be like that. We don't want people to hurry past us, and look the other way, as if they were afraid of being seen speaking to us. We want our hearts to be like a friendly house, to which everybody would love to come.

Then there is one more thought about the house which is in quarantine. We said, you know, that some people did go in. The doctor goes in because he can cure the one who is sick. And so if you or I have anything in the house of our heart which is wrong and dangerous, and which makes people begin to go by on the other side, just as they go by a house with the smallpox sign on it, then we must ask for the Great Physician to come and cure us. That Great Physician is Jesus, and whenever we ask Him, He will come in and take out of our hearts everything that is wrong, and make them clean and safe again.

XLIII

Keeping Our Tools Bright

THE other day I took up, out of a place in my desk where I had put it away, this knife. And this knife told me something which I want to tell to you.

As I looked at it, it told me, in the first place, about how carefully it had been made. It is a very fine knife, and was given to me because it is so fine. Its blades are made of the keenest and best tempered steel. It was made by a man who knew how to make good knives, and who took pride in making the best that he knew.

If you and I are to make for ourselves good tools, we also must work upon them carefully, and take pride in doing the best we can. The sort of tools we make are not always tools that can be seen, but they are just as real as if they were. Boys and girls go to school to train their minds to think straight, and to cut clean through a difficulty,

just as a good knife will cut through the knot of a rope. We cannot get our minds to be that kind of a tool unless we work upon them patiently. We have to keep hammering away, just as a workman hammers the steel a great many times before he gets it as perfect as he wants it to be. And when we want to train our bodies to play a game, or our fingers to play the piano, we have got to have the same patience to take pains. We must put our best work into what we want to do if what we mean to accomplish is to be something fine at the end.

But there is another thing this knife told me which I will tell you. When I took it out of where I had put it away so carefully, I thought I should find its steel blades clean and bright. But I did not. Instead they were spotted over with rust which is spoiling the blade.

Whose fault is that? Not the knife's fault, but mine. For when you let anything lie idle, and do not use it, it is sure to get covered with rust.

That is true, you see, not only of knives, but of people. I expect you have often heard some one say, "I have got rusty,"—in this thing or that. Boys and girls when they grow up and leave school may put their

books away, and not look at them for years. Then some one comes and asks them to read some Latin, or to do a sum in algebra, and they say, "Oh, my Latin and my algebra are rusty, and I don't think I can do it at all." People grow careless about saying their prayers, and the rust comes on that good habit and spoils it. People may stop going to church, and they grow rusty in that too, so that it is hard to begin going again. Every good habit which we stop using, and every good thought which we stop thinking, will grow rusty, and after a while be spoiled. The only way to keep all the best things we know clean and bright for service is to use them all the time.

XLIV

The Football's Sermon

ONE of the games which boys like best to play, and which a good many girls like to watch, is football. If a football could speak, I expect it could preach us a good sermon about the different ways in which different boys play the game. I can think of three points which it might tell us about in that sermon.

The first point in the football's sermon is this: play the game clean. There are some boys who forget that. They will take advantage of mean tricks to hurt the boy playing against them, or to break the rules of the game unfairly when they think the referee and umpire do not see them. They will be rough when they do not need to be, and fall on the boy who has the ball after he is down. Boys like these are the toughs of football. They may seem to be very dangerous players for a while, but they do not succeed in the end; for after a while their own team-mates lose respect for them and

do not like to play by their side. The boy who plays clean, who will not take a mean advantage, and is fair always, is the boy who will be the real leader finally.

The second point is this: play the game hard. A boy can be fair and straight, and still play with every ounce of strength he has in him. There is no room in football for the boy who quits because he is hurt, or shirks because the game begins to go against him. The great player is the one who plays his best from the moment the referee's whistle blows for the game to begin until it blows again when the game is ended. Whatever the score is, whatever the way he may be feeling, he does his best as long as he is on the field.

Third and last in the football's sermon would be this point: play the game together. No football eleven would be of much account if it did not have real teamwork. That is, it could not win if every boy were thinking only of himself and trying to show off the way he can play, and not trying to fit in with all the others to make the whole team win.

I knew of a man once in college who gave a wonderful example of the fine, unselfish spirit which thinks not of one's self, but of

the team. He and one other man were both trying for the position of center on the University eleven. The other man was a stronger player in every respect except one: he could not pass the ball as surely as this man whom I am speaking about. So this man went to the coach and told him just how he thought the other man could improve his passing. He preferred to lose his own chance of making the eleven rather than not have the team made just as strong as it possibly could be made. This man had his reward, too, because the other man whom he had helped to go ahead of him was injured and could not go into the big game; and so he himself was put on the eleven, and the team played such a game as no eleven in that college had played for years, and won the championship by a great score.

The things which are true in football are true in that other and much bigger game which we might call the game of life. In that game, too, the first rule is, play clean. Not to be fair at school, to copy somebody else's examples, and somebody else's Latin exercise, and bring it into class just as though it were one's own work, to take crooked paths to some success in business, or to try to be popular in society by doing something

which is not high and fine, may seem to work for a time, but it will not work in the long run. To play the game clean is the only way for any boy or girl to grow up into the man and woman whom all people will respect.

Then, just as in football, so in the game of life, we must play the game hard. It does not do to be discouraged when we fail at first. The boy or girl who stands at the foot of the class may get to the head before the year is over and stay there if that boy or girl has grit enough to persevere. It does not do to stop and sulk when things go against us, and think that we can be excused from our duty because it is hard, and because sometimes we may get hurt in trying to do it. Hurt or no hurt, our business is to play hard until the whistle blows for the end.

Then, last of all, we must play the game together. We are responsible each one not only for himself but for each other. We must help encourage others to do their best. It is a good thing to go to Sunday-school, but it is a very much better thing not only to go but to help make that Sunday-school such a good one that others may be glad they are there. It is a good thing to go to

church, but it is a better thing not only to go but to help others to want to come. It is a good thing to stand up and say that we want to be followers of Jesus Christ, but it is best of all to serve Him so well that others will want to serve Him too. We must try to be like the great player on the football field, who always is the one who plays his part in such a way that everybody else on his side finds it easier to do his best because he is there.

XLV

Entering Wedges

DO you remember what a wedge is, and what it looks like? Look at this one. One edge of it, you see, is very thin and sharp, and the other end is broad, like the head of an axe.

If a man cuts down a great tree, and wants to split the trunk in pieces, this is the way he does it: he makes a cut in the wood just wide enough for the thin edge of his wedge to go in, and then he drives the wedge in deeper. The deeper it goes the wider the wedge spreads the wood, and presently when it has been driven in deep enough, it will split the wood in two.

The thing which makes a wedge work is the way it widens from that thin edge at the beginning to that thick spread at the end. The little thin edge does not seem to amount to much by itself. It will not split the wood at all, but it cuts the way for that wide part that is to follow, and which the wood cannot resist. But the wood could resist it unless

the thin edge went in first. You could never take a wedge and drive it in butt end foremost. It could not get started into the log at all. The point of the wedge must cleave the way.

When we think about wedges they could give us a very useful reminder about the way in which something that seems to begin very small and powerless may be very powerful when it is hammered home. Sometimes people think that the beginning of a bad habit will not amount to much, because it seems like such a little thing. But presently, like the wedge, as it is driven in it begins to make a wider and wider gap in our good thoughts and our good customs, and presently it splits the very best part of us in two.

But then there is the other and more cheerful way of thinking about wedges. The fine things which we want to do may seem discouraging when we first try to do them, but perseverance is like a wedge which becomes the more sure to do its work the farther we drive it in. If boys and girls have some problem to work at school, or some hard work to do, or the thick log of laziness or cowardice to break up from across their path, they may think at first that they make very little impression upon it. Just a little scratch

is all they seem to accomplish in the beginning. The great big difficulty seems to be there just as hard and obstinate and hopeless as ever. But when any one says of a thing which he means to accomplish, "I will," that scratch which seemed so small can be like the entering point of the wedge. If every day he drives that "I will" in with a new effort, it will split the old difficulty into pieces very soon.

XLVI

Buying Tickets

HERE is something which suggests all sorts of pleasant thoughts. It is a railroad ticket. Just to see it makes us think of travelling on the train, and of looking out of the window while trees, and fields, and rivers, and towns pass by.

Suppose I should say to you that I would give you this railroad ticket, and you could go and take a trip with it. Probably you think you would like that, and so you would go and get on the train and start off. Then after a while, when the train had gone a long way, you would say, "Why, this is winter-time, and this train is carrying me straight up into the coldest part of Canada, where as likely as not I shall freeze to death." Or it might be summer, and you would suddenly find out that the train was carrying you down to Florida where it might be so hot that you would wish you were a thousand miles away.

When people buy tickets to go on the railroad train, the first thing they ought to know

is which way they want to go. It would be silly, just for the sake of being on the train, to start off in the very direction you did not want to be.

And yet I think sometimes that boys and girls, and maybe older people too, do something just as silly as that. A crowd of other boys and girls come along and say, "Come, go with us." And perhaps you start off without ever asking at all where it is that they are going. Are they carrying you off to places where you really want to be, or where you do not want to be at all? Would they bring you to good thoughts and kind actions, or are they just giving you a ticket to go with them to something which may be mean and thoughtless and harmful? You want to know which way your train is going before you climb on board.

Then, even after you are quite sure which way your train will go, you want to be sure also that your ticket will carry you as far as you want to ride. Suppose you started out on the train to go to some big and beautiful city, and the train should draw up at a little station, with nothing but bare fields and gloomy swamps around it? And suppose the conductor should come to you and say, "Well, here we are: this is the place where

you get off." Then you would look out of the window and say, "But I don't want to get off at any such place as this!"—and he would say, "But this is as far as your ticket carries you." Then, off you would get, while the train went on, and you would wonder what in the world you would do next.

As a matter of fact, that is just the sort of thing which does happen to some people. Something very like that would happen to boys and girls who go to school and do not work. They think that just because they are going to school they are buying a ticket which will give them a fine ride on the train of knowledge, which will lead to the things they want to do when they are grown. But after a while they will find that though they started out in the right direction they have gotten a ticket which takes them only half way. And when they are grown, instead of arriving at some fine success, they will be dropped off in some swampy place of disappointment and of failure.

We cannot buy railroad tickets for nothing, and we cannot buy our tickets on any of the big journeys in God's world for nothing. When we go to the railroad station and put down our money for a ticket, it means that we have had to work hard to be

able to get that ticket. And so if we really want to go far in our life, and to reach the fine and happy things which we imagine we shall arrive at some day, we must work for this too. We must pay the money of hard studying if we are going to buy the ticket which will take us far on the railroad of knowledge; and we must pay the money of perseverance and steady faithfulness if we expect to be able to ride on the big railroad that runs to success.

XLVII

Grapes and the Vine

IN the fall the markets are full of baskets of grapes,—big, purple bunches, like this one here in my hand. I expect there is hardly anybody whose mouth does not water a little when he sees these grapes, or who would not be glad to have them for himself.

Do you think that any of us could make a bunch of grapes like this? Suppose we were given some sugar, and some water, and some purple coloring, and anything else that we might think we could somehow use, and we set out to make a bunch of grapes. We could not do it, could we? We should not even know how to begin. In fact, we should laugh at the idea of even trying such a thing.

How *are* these grapes made? People who live in the country know, because they have seen, and pretty much every one else has been in the country some time or other, and so may have seen it too. Out on the slopes of the hills the vineyards are planted, with

long lines of trellises, on which the vines grow, and on the vines come the big clusters of grapes. Men cannot make these grapes with their hands. The vine makes them. Its roots go down into the ground and suck the moisture from it, and its leaves and tendrils reach up into the warm sunlight; and from that moisture and that sunlight, the vine makes its sap, and the sap, in some wonderful way, makes the grapes grow on the boughs of the vine.

If you or I walked through a vineyard at the time when the grapes were ripening, we might see, here and there, lying on the ground, a piece of the vine which had been broken off. Some one passing by had broken it, or the wind had flung it down; and there it would lie withering. Its leaves would die and its grapes shrivel and fall off. It would have lost its life, because it would have lost its place on the vine. It is only when they are a part of the vine that the grapes can grow, and ripen, and be made perfect.

If we should turn to the pages of our gospel of St. John, we could read there about what Jesus said once about the vine. He was making the men whom He loved best understand how they needed to keep very

close to Him, if their lives were to be full of the fruits of goodness. "I am the vine," He said, "ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." He meant that they must not let anything separate them from Him. They must keep their thoughts at one with His thoughts, and make all that they wanted to do a part of what they thought He wanted them to do, in order that the strength and godliness which was in Him might be in them too.

Just what He said to those men whom He loved long ago He would say to men and women, and boys and girls whom He loves now. He wants us to keep our lives close to His life, and be joined to Him, just as the branches are joined to the vine. It is a good thing for us to remember that whenever we see the purple grapes. You and I can be like the well-ladened vines, filled with the rich, ripe fruit of sweet thinking and kindly deeds, which can make others glad, if in our prayers, and all our thoughts, we are keeping close to Jesus.

XLVIII

The Something That Was Very Valuable

ONCE, long ago, about the time when your great-grandfathers were boys, there were not any such great cities as there are to-day, and not very many people lived in cities at all. Nobody knew, either, of all the wonderful things which we see around us now. There were no railroads nor steamships, and no telegraphs, and no telephones, and the people who lived in the country did not travel much, and could not go down the streets to great stores which sell all sorts of things, as we can do,—because, in the first place, there were no streets, and, in the second place, because there were no stores. Sometimes men used to go through the country with packs of different wares on their backs, and would go from house to house and open their packs up, and sell what they had to the people.

Now one day in that time, years and years ago, the boys and girls out in a part of the country which I know of, when they walked along the road one morning saw signs tacked

up on the fences and the trees. The signs said that if any boy or girl would come to the village, to the green in front of the post-office, the next Saturday, they could buy three of the most useful things in the world for two cents.

Then everybody began to wonder what these most useful things in the world that could be bought for two cents were. Some of the boys said that they thought the most useful thing in the world was a horse, and maybe somebody had bought a lot of horses very cheap and was going to sell a horse to every boy for two cents apiece. Some of the girls thought that a dress was as useful as anything, and perhaps they could buy a whole dress for two cents. So everybody guessed, and nobody knew, and they all wondered.

Then on Saturday all the boys and girls who could get two cents flocked to the village to see what they could buy with them. And there they found a man standing on a platform ready to show them what he had. And what do you suppose it was?

There were no horses and no dresses, and not anything very big and interesting looking at all. What he had was a little paper with three needles in it;—a big needle,

a middle sized needle and a small needle,—and he said he would sell each one of these papers of needles for two cents.

Now of course you may just be sure that all the boys and girls were tremendously disappointed. They had come from everywhere to see some great and fine thing, and all they could buy was three needles.

But the man, who knew very well that they were disappointed, began to talk and tell them about the needles. He said, "I see a girl there who has a dress which has a split in the sleeve, and after a while if that goes on her good dress will not be worth anything at all. With one of these needles of mine she could mend it and save her whole dress. And then over yonder I saw a boy drive up with some harness on his horse tied up with string. One of these days that string will break and his harness will fall to pieces. But with this big needle he could mend his harness so that it will be as good as new; or, if he is very smart, he can take some leather and make a whole set of harness for himself. With these three needles you can make all the things that you have better, and can make some new things which you never thought you would have. If you will try them and see, you will know that I said the

truth when I said they are three of the most useful things in the world."

So some of the boys and girls said that they believed that that was true, and that the needles were worth two cents; so they bought them and took them home.

I expect that in other ways too what the man said makes us remember something that is so. There is an old proverb which says, "A stitch in time saves nine." That is true not only of dresses and harnesses and covers on baseballs, but it is true also of us, —of the things inside of us. If we have the habit of telling the truth, and then some day think that one little lie will not matter very much, we have made a big mistake. It makes a great hole which presently will split and widen, and we had better sew it up by confessing and telling the truth right away. If boys and girls fall into the habit of laziness, they may think that that little tear at first will not make any difference, but it may make all the difference between a sound life and one that may be torn in pieces. We need to have about with us always little needles of carefulness, which will sew up quickly every single place at which our best thoughts and our best habits have been torn by anything that is wrong.

XLIX

The Builder of Roads

SUPPOSE you wanted to go to see a friend who lived somewhere off in the country, and you started off one morning to walk there: how would you go? Why, of course you would go by the road, you say; and so you would.

If you started off to walk a long distance, and did not go by the road, you might have a very hard time arriving. You might say, "I am not going to bother to find the road, but just start out any way I please in that direction, and keep straight on until I get there." Then you would find yourself presently climbing fences and crawling through barbed wire, and going across ploughed fields where your feet sank in and it was hard to walk, and having to jump across streams of water where there was no bridge, and scramble up hills through the bushes; and if you did not lose your way entirely, and got at last to where you wanted to

go, you would be so tired and out of breath that you would almost wish you had never come.

Some people do live in places where no roads run, or else roads so bad that people do not like to travel on them; and the result is that hardly any people go where they live, and perhaps they get to be very lonely and unhappy. Perhaps, too, because the roads are so bad, the children do not get to school, and they do not have any books, or any of the beautiful things which we have around us, and so their lives are very ignorant and dull.

If some man came and built a beautiful, broad road, straight up to the door of their houses, so that other people began to flow by, and they should begin to see new friends, and have a chance to buy things which now they cannot get, and learn things from the people coming past, which now they never hear about, they would love the man who built the road with all their hearts.

Then when we think how this is so, we can turn to our Bible and read about a man who was a great builder of roads. His name was John the Baptist, and the kind of roads he built were the kind of roads which run straight into people's hearts. And the rea-

son he built them was so that Jesus Christ could come in.

When John the Baptist lived there were a great many people who had no road into their hearts which Jesus could come by. They were like people who live all shut in by the mountains, or with some deep valley in front of their houses which has no bridge across it, or with such a crooked road leading up to their door that no one could find the way. The mountains which were around them were the great wrong things which they had done, and the valleys were the deep gulfs of the right things they would not do, and the crooked paths were the ugly crooked thoughts which they would not make straight so that Jesus could find the way. But John the Baptist said, "Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked paths shall be made straight." And so he tried to help people to break down their sins, and to fill up the big valleys of carelessness and indifference, and to make their thoughts straight and true for Jesus to come to them. For all the people whom he helped it was just as though a great new road had been built straight to their heart's door. Jesus came to them over that new road of good

desires which John the Baptist had helped to build, and made lonesome people glad, and dull people happy, and sinful people good, because He had come.

What Jesus wants us to do for other people for His sake is just what John the Baptist did. He wants us to help them get rid of their wrong habits, and fill up the deep valleys across which He cannot come, and make a straight road of good new thoughts, along which He will come to the heart of every man and woman and boy and girl.

L

Water and the Deserts

IN this cup there is something we none of us could get on, even for a day, without. It is water.

Without water the whole world could not be the kind of place it is. For water makes things grow. Out in the west there are miles and miles and hundreds of miles of tremendous deserts—just great, white stretches of hot sand, all barren, with no green thing growing there at all. It is because there is no water. But wherever there does happen to be a stream, or a little river, then the desert changes into something entirely different. Willows spring up by the waterside, and the green crops grow, and the fruit trees are loaded down with golden fruit.

Then, water is needed not only to make our plants and our trees grow, but it is needed to keep us alive. We could do without almost any one sort of food, but we

can never do without water. If we did not have it, we should be bound to die.

When we think of this, we begin to understand all that Jesus meant when He said, "I am the water of life."

He makes all lovely things grow. We need to be thinking of Jesus and trying to be like Jesus, if we want cheerfulness and helpfulness and goodness to spring up like flowers all around. Without Him, they will shrivel up and wither.

We need the help of Jesus to make us live our best lives at all. If we do not have Him, the finest part of us dies, as a man dies without water.

Also we must remember that there are a great many people in the world who are thirsty for this water of life, and cannot get it. All the people off in the lands we call heathen need to know about Jesus. They need Him just as the dry desert needs the water to make the flowers grow, and just as a man who is fainting needs water to make him strong again. It is our business to help send them what they need, even if that costs us a great deal. Once, when the great soldier and gentleman, Sir Philip Sidney, was lying on the battle-field, terribly wounded and thirsty, some one came up and brought him water;

but he would not take it, and gave it instead to another soldier, who was wounded more than he. And don't you think that we ought to give some of the things we want to some of the people who have so much bigger needs than ours? Oughtn't we to take some of the money we might use to buy things we thought we wanted for ourselves and give it to missions, to carry over to China and Japan and everywhere the message of Jesus, which is the water that will make people live?

LI

Christmas Candles

THROUGH the Christmas time we are thinking of the dear Christ who was born in Bethlehem; and we remember that He said He came to be the light of the world.

As soon as we begin to think about it, we understand what a friendly and beautiful thing light is. In the dark, people are afraid. In the dark, a great many wrong and cruel things are done. The light makes the earth seem safe again, and all the world bright and glad. And the Christ is the everlasting light who is to make the world bright and glad in all places and at all times.

He lets us help Him carry His light into the corners that would be dark without Him; and so what we must do first is to let Him make His goodness shine in us.

Suppose the great, flaming candle here, in the high candlestick, should be the light of

the life of Jesus. And suppose these little candles, without any light at all, were you and I. (*Let a number of the boys and girls come and stand in a semicircle in the chancel, and hold each one a small candle.*)

What is the way to make us, and all the other people in the world like us, shine with light? Here is one way. (*Strike a match to light each candle. Put the match out. Then strike another match to light the next candle, and so on.*) But it is a long, slow way. And it is a long, slow way when each one of us has to try all by himself to get his goodness.

But there is another way. The dear Christ came into the world to give to us the light that is in Him,—the beautiful, bright shining light of the spirit of God. There is a hymn which tells us beautifully just what sort of a light He was and is. Let us sing part of it, and listen well to the words as we sing.

"O little town of Bethlehem,
How still we see thee lie;
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by;
Yet, in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee to-night.

"For Christ is born of Mary,
And gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King
And peace to men on earth."

So the light of Jesus comes and kindles the light in us. This is the quick and simple way. (*Light the candles one by one from the flame of the big candle.*) And it is the way in which goodness comes best to us. We bring ourselves close up to the big, shining life of Jesus, thinking of Him, and trying to be like Him, and then before we know it, His light kindles over in us too, and we begin to be like Him.

Especially at this Christmas-time we must remember how the dear Christ depends on us to give light to others, just as He gives it to us. At Christmas, boys and girls like you are happy because on Christ's birthday your fathers and mothers, who remember Him, have tried to make you happy. And when you remember—as I know some of you do—boys and girls who live in homes which are terribly poor, and you try to give some of them a Christmas such as you have; when

you remember some lonely person whom you can go to see and invite to your Christmas party; or when you think of the little children sick in the big hospitals and go and carry them a flower or some toys,—then you are helping spread the light of Christ which has come to you. You are trying to make the light of the gladness which came with Him shine in places which, without Him, would be dark.

Just one boy or one girl can do so much for Him. Sometimes one boy or girl is in the midst of people who have nothing of the spirit of Christ in them; and they do not know Him. He is hidden—just as this candle is hidden (*take the big candle away*) —and they are all dark. (*Blow out all the small candles except one.*) Then how are all the people who are not like Christ—who are selfish and gloomy and unhappy—going to begin to be like Him? Why, only as the one who has His spirit gives it to others, and out of his own goodness and unselfishness makes other people want to be good and unselfish too. (*Let the one candle light the others one by one.*) So shall the Christ who came in the dark stable of Bethlehem be really the everlasting light for all the world.

And so again we sing our prayer that His

light may come into us, in order that we may have a chance to pass it on to others.

"How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still,
The dear Christ enters in.

"O holy Child of Bethlehem!
Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in,
Be born in us to-day.
We hear the Christmas angels
The great glad tidings tell;
Oh, come to us, abide with us,
Our Lord Emmanuel!"

LII

Why the Holly Has Red Berries

THIS is the story of why the holly has red berries. In the beginning, the holly was like these branches which sometimes we see even now, bare and dull, with no berries at all. But now the holly is filled, especially at Christmas time, with beautiful red clusters between its green leaves. And this is to tell you how that came about.

Once, long ago, in a country across the seas, a little town lay among the hills. The name of that town was Nazareth. On the hills the forest grew,—great trees of cedar and fir and oak,—and in the midst of those trees there stood one little holly tree, which seemed very strange and out of place to the other trees, because no such tree as that had been heard of in that country.

Now in the forest there was a legend that if ever a king came out to walk beneath the trees the first tree that should see him and recognize him should grow beautiful beyond

all the other trees, and should be clothed with splendor, as a king is clothed with his royal robe.

In the town there lived a little lad who used to go and walk sometimes in the forest. The trees would see him coming, and they would ask one another who it was. "Oh, that is only the carpenter's son," the oak would say to the cedar.

He used to walk and look up at the great trees, and perhaps at the sky which showed through their branches.

"He is looking at me, and thinking how great and tall I am," said the fir tree.

"No, he is looking at me, and at my wide-spreading limbs," said the cedar.

"It is not at either of you that he looks, but at me, the lord of all the trees," said the oak.

But the little holly watched him and said nothing.

"When the king comes into the forest, if he ever does come, he will come and look at me, and so I shall see him first," said each of the great trees. But the more the time went by and no king seemed to come, the more they were out of temper.

Day after day the little lad would come and walk in the forest. Sometimes he would

sing to himself, and sometimes he would be very silent, only gazing up through the branches to the patches of blue sky that shone above. The great trees had become accustomed to his coming, and did not pay any attention to him any more. They did not think it was a matter of importance whether he came or not.

But the holly tree used to watch him, and think to itself: "I am sure that if the king ever comes he would not have so beautiful a face as the little lad. I have watched him, and he is always kind. The little animals of the wood are not afraid of him, and the birds do not fly away as he comes by, but sit on the branches and sing as if they sang to him. I should like for him to be my king, and I should like to try to do what I thought that he would want me to do."

One day the great trees looked, and the little lad had sat down in front of the holly tree and was looking up into its branches and its thorny leaves.

"Look at that boy," said the oak, "gazing at that ridiculous little holly tree! I always thought that there was something queer about him."

"Yes, I never cared much about him from the first," said the tall fir tree.

"And I always said that there was something curious about his eyes," said the lordly cedar.

But the holly said nothing, only it was very glad.

Then after a time the little lad went away and was seen in the forest no more. The holly tree missed him every day, but always it thought of him and tried to think what the little lad who was more beautiful than a king would want it to do. So it used to try to make space in its roots for the burrows of the little creatures of the forest, and spread its branches as wide as it could so that the birds might nest there.

The years went by and the lad was grown to be a man. He went out among the people of his country and began to tell them of the ways of God. He was very gentle to all the weary and discouraged, and very tender to those who tried and failed, but very stern and terrible too to those who deliberately did wrong. So in a great city where he went, sinful men who hated him took him one day and made ready to nail him on a cross. And before they did it, they put upon him a crown of thorns and a scarlet robe, such as kings wear. And though they did not mean it for the truth, yet, nevertheless, it was the truth

when they wrote upon a sign and hung it there above his head when they nailed him on the cross, "This is the King!"

Then off in the forest on the hillside above the little town something wonderful happened to the holly tree. On its branches, between its thorny leaves, scarlet berries began to grow, and the holly was clothed with its spendid royal robe, for it alone had seen and recognized the King.

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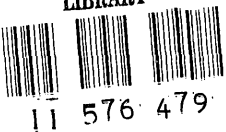
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